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# Philanthropia

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***Philanthropia:***  
**A Humanities Journal on Philanthropy**  
**and Civil Society**

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The mission of *Philanthropia* is to advance the understanding of philanthropy and civil society from the perspectives of the humanities and normative theory. Toward that end, we invite article submissions from disciplines such as History, Philosophy, Literary Studies, Religious Studies, Classical Studies, Theology, Linguistics, Anthropology, Ethics, Communications, Rhetoric, and Political Theory.

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## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

*Philanthropia*, as a word and concept, originated in Periclean Athens as a philosophical term closely associated with the concept of *paideia*, understood as education and acculturation with the aim of attaining the virtues. In this sense of the term, it later became closely intertwined with the Latin concept of *humanitas*, understood as being educated to possess virtues of character by the study of *eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artes*, or 'education and training in the liberal arts'.

Despite this inherent affinity between philanthropy, the humanities, and normative theory, they rarely appear in research published in the field of philanthropic studies. Most scholarship in this field derives from the social sciences, public policy, or managerial training. But is this because disciplines such as history, philosophy, religious studies, and ethics are poorly suited to answer pressing questions of philanthropy and civil society?

The question of the suitability of the humanities and normative theory for studying philanthropy is rooted in the role of the voluntary sector in society. Philanthropy is more than the sum of a series of private actions; it is voluntary action intended for the public good. The concept of the public good has deep historical, religious, philosophical, and normative dimensions. Especially in a pluralistic world, these disciplines are necessary to more competently adjudicate between contested visions of the public good. We at *Philanthropia* advocate this broader understanding of philanthropy and civil society.

The mission of *Philanthropia* is to advance the understanding of philanthropy and civil society from the perspective of the humanities and normative theory. The idea for this journal dates at least as far back as the late 2000s. We are therefore extremely grateful to LCC International University for sponsoring its creation. Thank you also to the Bob Collier Foundation and the Bodman Foundation for providing seed funding. In addition, we sincerely appreciate the authors who contributed to this inaugural issue. The second issue is planned for spring 2025. Following that, we aim to adopt a double-blind, peer-reviewed format, published semi-annually, while continuing to publish occasional special issues by invitation.

The time is right to start this journal, and we look forward to presenting our readers with excellent scholarship on philanthropy and civil society!

Julianna Giannoutsou  
Marty Sulek  
Andrew L. Williams

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# Humanities and Normative Theory in the Study of Philanthropy: A Literature Review of Research from 1998–2023 and Beyond

## ABSTRACT

*The humanities and normative theory played a prominent role in creating the field of philanthropic studies. However, the leading outlets for research in this field now publish little scholarship from disciplines such as history, religious studies, philosophy, literature, and ethics—favoring instead disciplines from the social sciences, public policy, and managerial studies. Our review begins by documenting this phenomenon from 1998 to 2023 in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (NVSQ)*, *Voluntas*, *Nonprofit Management & Leadership (NML)*, *Journal of Civil Society (JoCS)*, and several similar publications. Subsequently, we show that vital humanities and normative theory research on philanthropy and civil society exists elsewhere in disconnected pockets across the academic landscape. These two findings demonstrate the need for a new academic forum to promote and connect humanities and normative theory research in philanthropic studies.*

## INTRODUCTION

The humanities are currently in a state of crisis in academia. This is reflected, in one sense, by the declining enrollment of humanities programs in higher education. Across OECD countries from 2015–2018, humanities degrees as a share of all degrees awarded dropped 5% for bachelors, 11% for masters, and 9% for doctoral degrees.<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., by comparison, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in the humanities dropped from 13.1% to 8.8% from 2012–2022.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Rob Townsend, director of the humanities, arts, and culture program at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAA&S) warns, “We’re

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1 American Academy of Arts and Sciences, “Humanities Degrees Declining Worldwide Except at Community Colleges,” *Humanities Indicators*, June 14, 2021, <https://www.amacad.org/news/humanities-degrees-declining-worldwide-except-community-colleges>.

2 American Academy of Arts and Sciences, “Bachelor’s Degrees in the Humanities,” *Humanities Indicators*, accessed October 12, 2024, <https://www.amacad.org/humanities-indicators/higher-education/bachelors-degrees-humanities>.

reaching a kind of existential tipping point for a lot of departments that could lead to their elimination”.<sup>3</sup>

Even more concerning than declining enrollments in humanities programs, though, is the epistemological crisis in the humanities themselves. The methodologies of the hard sciences are generally considered the gold standard for knowledge production and ‘fact’ generation. The humanities and normative theory, by contrast, are often seen as largely spinning their wheels on nebulous questions of ‘values’. Nevertheless, as Martha Nussbaum has argued, education in the humanities is not only desirable as an end in and of itself; it provides the essential ingredients for responsible citizenship: “the ability to assess historical evidence, to use and think critically about economic principles, to assess accounts of social justice, to speak a foreign language, to appreciate the complexities of the major world religions.”<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the study of the humanities and normative theory contributes to human flourishing and the common good.

That brings us to the question of why the humanities and normative theory are important to the field of philanthropic studies. On one level, the humanities and normative theory function as the equivalent of the left brain of the field, providing insight into its subjective aspects, such as assessing the relative merit of various values, narrative structures, and the like. The social sciences, by contrast, represent the rational side of the brain, and are interested in empirical knowledge, objective analysis, and generating durable facts.

This complementary relationship is true enough, but it points to another more crucial role that the humanities and normative theory have played and can hopefully one day reprise in philanthropic studies; namely, to provide normative and theoretical bases, both ancient and novel, from which scientific examinations of philanthropy and civil society may more usefully proceed. A hint of this role may be found in the surveys of *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, and the *Journal of Civil Society* that we conducted for this literature review. There, we found the humanities and normative theory played a crucial role during the 1990s and 2000s in discovering and defining the field of philanthropic studies and providing its theoretical framework.

We conducted the research for this literature review with several connected purposes in mind. The first was to shed light on the humanities and normative theory scholarship available on philanthropy and civil society. The second was to highlight the presence, or lack thereof, of these disciplinary perspectives in the standard literature of the field of philanthropic studies. The third was to

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3 Anne Farrell, “The Decline of the Humanities Studies Around the World Is an Enormous Risk for Humankind,” *Pressenza*, February 2, 2024, <https://www.pressenza.com/2024/02/the-decline-of-the-humanities-studies-around-the-world-is-an-enormous-risk-for-humankind/>.

4 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, new paperback ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 95.

demonstrate the continuing relevance of these disciplinary perspectives to this burgeoning field.

With these purposes in mind, we propose two primary research questions for this literature review:

- First, what is the state of humanities and normative theory scholarship in the major journals in the field of philanthropic studies?
- Second, what is the state of humanities and normative theory scholarship on philanthropy and civil society outside of the major journals in the field?

Embarking on the research for this article, our operating assumption was that the humanities and normative theory were not well represented in the standard literature of philanthropic studies. At the same time, though, we hypothesized that there was a considerable amount of scholarship on these subjects available in the wider literature of the humanities and normative theory disciplines.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The humanities disciplines surveyed in this literature review include: history, philosophy, literary studies, classics, philology, linguistics, the fine arts, and some aspects of anthropology. The normative theory disciplines surveyed, on the other hand, include: political philosophy, ethics, legal theory, and again, some aspects of anthropology. We've also treated religious studies as a separate category in its own right, given its central importance to both philanthropy and civil society.

Surveying the scholarly literature of the humanities and normative theory relating to philanthropy and civil society entails employing a much more expansive definition of those terms than is usually the case in the academic field of philanthropic studies. The standard definition for philanthropy generally used in the scholarly literature of this field is as “the private giving of time or valuables (money, security, property) for public purposes”.<sup>5</sup> Another definition often used, and one that better captures its normative dimensions, is as “voluntary action for the public good”.<sup>6</sup>

A comprehensive survey and analysis of the meaning of philanthropy encompassing its full modern usage, by comparison, reveals a number of distinct but interrelated modes of meaning. There is, for instance, a literal mode of philanthropy derived from ancient Greek as the ‘friend of mankind’. There are also archaic modes of usage now considered somewhat obsolete, such as ‘the love of God for humankind’, or as being synonymous with ‘humanity’. There is an ideal mode of usage used to describe the attainment of aims, goals,

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5 Lester M. Salamon, *America's Nonprofit Sector: A Primer*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Foundation Center, 1999), 10.

6 Robert L. Payton, *Philanthropy: Voluntary Action for the Public Good* (New York: American Council on Education/Macmillan, 1988).

outcomes, or objectives in terms of meeting a need, attaining a good, and/or advancing human happiness and well-being.

There is an ontological mode of philanthropy to describe an innate desire, moral sentiment, psychological predisposition, or physical nature that attracts a subject to humans. There's a volitional mode to describe the good will, intent, or readiness to voluntarily help others. There's an actual mode to describe an objective act, such as the giving of money, time, or effort, to a charitable cause or public purpose. And finally, there's a social mode, to describe a relation, movement, organization, or other such social entity larger than the individual that embodies an explicitly defined charitable cause or good.<sup>7</sup>

Civil society also has a more expansive meaning than is usually employed in the scholarly literature of philanthropic studies. There, it is usually considered synonymous with the organizations that compose the nonprofit or 'civil society' sector. As a theoretical concept, though, civil society also contains important normative dimensions: as a conception of the good society based on the voluntary association of free and reasonable citizens; and as the public forum for open ended discussion and debate on commonly held interests and purposes.<sup>8</sup> As a journal focused on the humanities and normative theory, *Philanthropia* is naturally interested in these more expansive meanings of both philanthropy and civil society.

## METHODOLOGY

The academic study of philanthropy and civil society is highly interdisciplinary in nature. While the disciplinary home of much of the scholarship in the field is often clear, academic distinctions are frequently blurred due to this interdisciplinarity. Normative theorists, for example, often draw from empirical studies in developing their theories, while social scientists regularly employ the theories of normative theorists to frame the hypotheses of their empirical studies. Historians, by comparison, frequently use the analytical tools of social science in their historical investigations, while social scientists often employ historical data to contextualize their analysis of current trends.

As such, it is necessary to employ additional inclusion/exclusion criteria over and above scholarly discipline to determine how to categorize the interdisciplinary scholarship of philanthropic studies. We employ the following general criteria to determine whether a work of interdisciplinary scholarship may be properly categorized as belonging to the humanities and/or normative theory:

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7 Marty Sulek, "On the Modern Meaning of Philanthropy," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2010): 204.

8 Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 91.

- Qualitative vs. quantitative – whereas the social sciences are primarily focused on the quantitative analysis of data, the humanities and normative theory are primarily focused on qualitative assessments of information.
- Deductive vs. inductive – whereas the social sciences tend to be more inductive and empirical in their approach, the humanities and normative theory tend to be more deductive and contemplative.
- Theoretical vs. practical – whereas managerial training and public policy studies are primarily interested in the practical applications of knowledge generated, scholarship in normative theory is more interested in developing frameworks for understanding more universal features of how we ought best to behave.
- Subjective vs. objective – While the social sciences are focused on generating objective knowledge about things, the humanities and normative theory are more focused on shedding light on the nature of the subjective self.
- Value vs. fact – While the sciences are focused on deriving hard facts from the objective analysis of data, normative theory is more interested in assessing the relative merit of essentially contested values.
- Past vs. present – While social science, public policy studies, and managerial training are primarily focused on the here and now with an eye to the immediate future, the humanities are primarily interested in the past with an eye to discerning what is eternally true. Generally speaking, the former loses interest in data more than 50 years old, whereas that is where proper historical investigation begins.

With these criteria as a guide, we conducted our literature review employing discovery and systematic processes.<sup>9</sup> Discovery searching included the authors' knowledge of the field and searches of major publication databases. Systematic research consisted of comprehensive reviews of several prominent journals in the field of philanthropic studies over the past quarter century. Most importantly, we reviewed every article from 1998-2023 in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (NVSQ)*, *Voluntas*, and *Nonprofit Management & Leadership (NML)* to identify scholarship from the humanities or normative theory. These three are widely considered the leading journals in the field of philanthropic

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9 Jamie Lynn Goodwin, Andrew Lloyd Williams, and Patricia Snell Herzog, "Cross-Cultural Values: A Meta-Analysis of Major Quantitative Studies in the Last Decade (2010-2020)," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (2020): 396, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080396>.

studies.<sup>10</sup> This is partly because they are the only journals exclusively dedicated to this field that are included in the Social Science Citation Index.<sup>11</sup>

We also surveyed several other influential journals in the field of philanthropic studies. Most notably, we examined every article in the *Journal of Civil Society (JoCS)* from its founding in 2005 to the present day, due to its significant overlap in the study of philanthropy and civil society. We reviewed all issues of *Voluntaristics Review (VR)* from its six-year publication run (2015–2021) due to its stated interdisciplinary aim and the publication record of its editor-in-chief, David Horton Smith. We also comprehensively reviewed several other journals that have philanthropy and/or civil society as their primary or secondary subject (see below). Furthermore, we searched the databases of *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, and *Voluntaristics Review* for literature reviews of the field from 1998–2023.

To complement our literature review of the major journals in the field, we identified scholarly literature on philanthropy and civil society in publications from the humanities and normative theory. This was largely a qualitative assessment, as there is not a comprehensive database exclusively focused on the humanities. There is also little commonly shared terminology among humanities scholars on philanthropy and civil society with which to conduct effective machine searches. Some of the most significant works on philanthropy and civil society from the humanities and normative theory have nothing in their titles that would match the standard nomenclature generally employed by social science scholars in the field of philanthropic studies.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, our survey of the wider literature is largely qualitative and subjective, which just happens to match well the nature of the scholarship we are attempting to highlight.

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10 Tracey M. Coule, Jennifer Dodge, and Angela M. Eikenberry, “Toward a Typology of Critical Nonprofit Studies: A Literature Review,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2022): 478–506, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020919807>; Chao Guo, Angela Bies, and Susan Phillips, “Introduction to the 50th Anniversary Special Issue,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52 (2023): 5S–11S; Megan LePere-Schloop and Rebecca Nesbit, “Disciplinary Contributions to Nonprofit Studies: A 20-Year Empirical Mapping of Journals Publishing Nonprofit Research and Journal Citations by Nonprofit Scholars,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52 (2023): 68S–101S.

11 Ethan Bernick and Skip Krueger, “An Assessment of Journal Quality in Public Administration,” *International Journal of Public Administration* 33, no. 2 (2010): 98–106; Jeffrey L. Brudney and Robert D. Herman, “Readers’ Perceptions of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Management Journals,” *The American Review of Public Administration* 34, no. 3 (2004): 293–301.

12 For example, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*, by Paul Veyne (1990); *The Accursed Share*, by Georges Bataille (1991); *On Hospitality*, by Jacques Derrida (2000); *London Labour and the London Poor*, by Henry Mayhew (1968).

## NVSQ

The journal *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (NVSQ), founded in 1972, is the premier academic journal in the field of philanthropic studies. It publishes research “from a diverse array of disciplinary and methodological perspectives on nonprofits, philanthropy, voluntary action, and civil society across the globe.”<sup>13</sup> Despite this stated scope, we find that NVSQ publishes a relatively small amount of humanities or normative theory research, mostly focusing instead on public policy, sociology, economics, and organizational behavior. Common topics in the journal cover motivations for volunteering, the impact of nonprofit organizations on public policy, philanthropy and giving patterns, and the role of nonprofits in social change. Additionally, studies on nonprofit governance and nonprofit accountability frequently appear.

Reflecting on the history of NVSQ, Kang *et al.*,<sup>14</sup> highlight its thematic stability over the past fifty years, noting that the journal has consistently focused on key areas such as public policy, sociology, and organizational behavior. Despite several past attempts to broaden its scope beyond these themes, the journal has maintained a high degree of thematic consistency across different editorial tenures.

Nevertheless, NVSQ has published a small stream of humanities and normative theory research over the years. It has, for instance, published research with an ethical and/or values lens, including articles on moral motivations for philanthropy,<sup>15</sup> and normative frameworks for nonprofit accountability.<sup>16</sup>

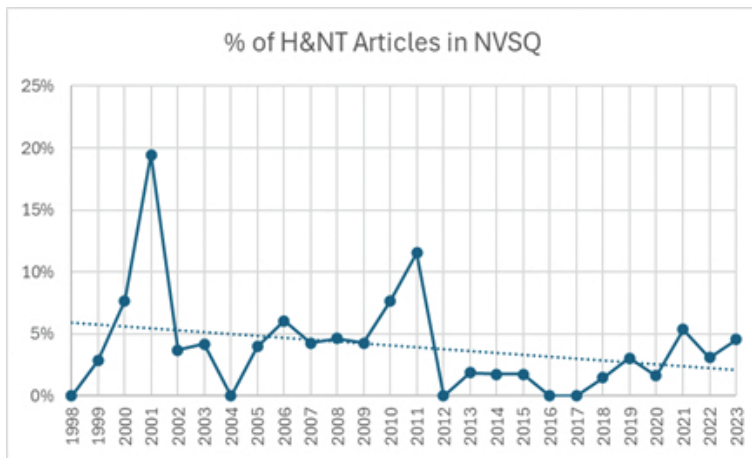
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13 SAGE Publications, “Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,” last modified October 28, 2024, <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/journal/nonprofit-and-voluntary-sector-quarterly>.

14 Chul Hee Kang, Young Min Baek, and Erin Hea-Jin Kim, “Half a Century of NVSQ: Thematic Stability Across Years and Editors,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (June 2022): 658–79.

15 Shai M. Dromi, “Donor Identity, Morality, and Nonprofit Organizations: Soliciting Donations and Recruiting Volunteers for the Red Cross, 1863–1919,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 51, no. 5 (October 2022): 1010–30; Paul G. Schervish, “The Moral Biography of Wealth: Philosophical Reflections on the Foundation of Philanthropy,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (September 2006): 477–92.

16 Dennis R. Young, “Alternative Models of Government-Nonprofit Sector Relations: Theoretical and International Perspectives,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (March 2000): 149–72; Gwen I. Walden, “Who’s Watching Us Now? The Nonprofit Sector and the New Government by Surveillance,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (December 2006): 715–20.



Likewise, it has published articles on the role of religious organizations in the nonprofit sector,<sup>17</sup> and faith-based service delivery.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, several articles in *NVSQ* have explored the meaning of philanthropy from the perspective of philosophy, history, and ethics.<sup>19</sup> They have also looked at the historical roots of the nonprofit sector,<sup>20</sup> the evolution of social entrepreneurship,<sup>21</sup> and the philosophical underpinnings of loyalty, wealth, and charitable giving.<sup>22</sup> *NVSQ* has also included critical perspectives on the commercialization of the nonprofit sector,<sup>23</sup> ethical dilemmas around tainted

17 Antonin Wagner, “Religion and Civil Society: A Critical Reappraisal of America’s Civic Engagement Debate,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (February 2008): 626–45.

18 Patricia Wittberg, “Called to Service: The Changing Institutional Identities of American Denominations,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (September 2000): 357–76.

19 Marty Sulek, “On the Modern Meaning of Philanthropy,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (April 2010): 193–212; Marty Sulek, “On the Classical Meaning of *Philanthropia*,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (June 2010): 385–408.

20 Edith Archambault, “Historical Roots of the Nonprofit Sector in France,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 204–220.

21 Simon Teasdale, Enrico Bellazzecca, Anne de Bruin, and Michael J. Roy, “The (R) evolution of the Social Entrepreneurship Concept: A Critical Historical Review,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52, no. 1\_Suppl. (April 2023): 212–40.

22 Nancy D. Goldfarb, “Josiah Royce’s Philosophy of Loyalty as Philanthropy,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (February 2011): 720–739.

23 Maoz Brown, “The Moralization of Commercialization: Uncovering the History of Fee-Charging in the Nonprofit Sector,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 47, no. 5 (October 2018): 960–983.

donations,<sup>24</sup> and democratic theories of voluntary organizations.<sup>25</sup> Articles have delved into the cultural and structural evolution of civic organizations in different countries,<sup>26</sup> and historical examinations of nonprofit-public relations across various regions.<sup>27</sup>

However, *NVSQ* has offered relatively few articles over the last couple decades that are more strictly humanities or normative theory. It has published about 2 such articles per year on average, but with an overall downward trajectory in terms of the percentage of articles published (see accompanying Graph). The most notable exceptions to this overall downward trend occurred in 2001, and 2010-11. The spike in humanities and normative theory articles in 2001 stemmed from seven articles published that year, most of which appeared in a history themed issue in June (issue #2), including a substantive introduction by the noted historian of philanthropy, David Hammack.<sup>28</sup> The inclusion of historians in *NVSQ* at this time appears to have primarily stemmed from ARNOVA's outreach efforts to increase the disciplinary diversity of scholars attending the conference, including by awarding Focus Field conference travel grants (particularly for the humanities).<sup>29</sup> While ARNOVA's members did become more diverse in their disciplinary affiliations as a result of these grants, though, this diversity quickly evaporated once the funding ended.

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24 Donald Morris, "Tainted Money and Charity: Do 501(c)(3)s Have a Right to Refuse a Gift?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (June 2002): 186-206; Paul Dunn, "Strategic Responses by a Nonprofit When a Donor Becomes Tainted," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (February 2010): 102-123.

25 Angela M. Eikenberry, "Refusing the Market: A Democratic Discourse for Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2009): 582-596.

26 Sarah Busse Spencer, "Culture as Structure in Emerging Civic Organizations in Russia," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 6 (December 2011): 1073-1091; Peter Weber, "Ethnic Identity During War: The Case of German American Societies During World War I," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2014): 185-206.

27 Mordecai Lee, "Historical Milestones in the Emergence of Nonprofit Public Relations in the United States," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2011): 318-335.

28 David C. Hammack, "Introduction: Growth, Transformation, and Quiet Revolution in the Nonprofit Sector Over Two Centuries," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 157-73; Archambault, "Historical Roots of the Nonprofit Sector in France," 204-20; Ary Burger and Vic Veldheer, "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 221-46; Colin B. Burke, "Nonprofit History's New Numbers (and the Need for More)," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 174-203; Martin Gorsky and John Mohan, "London's Voluntary Hospitals in the Interwar Period: Growth, Transformation, or Crisis?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (June 2001): 247-75; Jon Van Til and Steven W. Ross, "Looking Backward: Twentieth-Century Themes in Charity, Voluntarism, and the Third Sector," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (March 2001): 112-29.

29 Brenda K. Bushouse, Gregory R. Witkowski, and Alan J. Abramson, "A History of ARNOVA at Fifty," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52 (2023): 42S.

The second spike in humanities and normative theory articles in *NVSQ* occurred in 2010<sup>30</sup> and 2011,<sup>31</sup> largely stemming from a concerted effort by the executive editors, Wolfgang Bielefeld and Dwight Burlingame (2005–2010), to include more articles of these types.<sup>32</sup> This momentum was not maintained by subsequent editors, however, despite their stated intentions to do so at the outset of their tenure. As later editors noted in their 50-year retrospective of the journal:

The struggle to enhance multi- and interdisciplinarity in *NVSQ* is long standing but perhaps becoming more challenging as a degree of path dependency increasingly constrains the field by creating and reinforcing silos of interest. In recounting the challenges of expanding the pool of reviewers to include greater fields of interest, Bielefeld and Burlingame (2005–2010) note “this is not a race to be won tomorrow but a walk of a lifetime.” A decade later, Guo, Bies, and Phillips were still on the long walk as they actively, but unsuccessfully, sought to appoint young historians and scholars from the humanities to the editorial board. Some have argued that the way forward is to establish a new journal explicitly focused on perspectives from the humanities and currently underrepresented disciplines, although this presents the risk that the field becomes more segmented. Others see the way forward as developing a strong pipeline of emerging scholars from diverse backgrounds and a wide range of disciplines and locales, with research associations like ARNOVA playing a major part in increasing opportunities for active mentorship, professional development, and networking.<sup>33</sup>

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30 Dunn, “Strategic Responses,” 102; Mendel, Stuart C, “Are Private Government, the Nonprofit Sector, and Civil Society the Same Thing?” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (August 2010): 717–33; Sulek, “On the Modern Meaning of Philanthropy,” 193–212; Sulek, “On the Classical Meaning of Philanthropía,” 385–408.

31 Juliana Flinn, “Ethnographic Methods in Nonprofit Management,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (June 2011): 420–34; Goldfarb, “Josiah Royce’s Philosophy,” 725; Lee, “Historical Milestones,” 320; Hindy Lauer Schachter, “Reflections on Political Engagement and Voluntary Association Governance,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (August 2011): 703–19; Spencer, “Culture as Structure,” 1075; Isabelle Stadelmann-Steffen and Markus Freitag, “Making Civil Society Work: Models of Democracy and Their Impact on Civic Engagement,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (June 2011): 526–51; Ying Xu and Ngan-Pun Ngai, “Moral Resources and Political Capital: Theorizing the Relationship Between Voluntary Service Organizations and the Development of Civil Society in China,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (April 2011): 247–69.

32 Susan D. Phillips et al., “*NVSQ*: The First Fifty Years, and Beyond,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52, no. 1\_suppl (2023): 18S.

33 *Ibid.*, 26S.

To summarize, *NVSQ* has had a somewhat mixed record in terms of publishing scholarship from the humanities and normative theory. Humanities scholars, particularly historians, attended ARNOVA, the publisher of *NVSQ*, in much greater numbers in the early years of the conference,<sup>34</sup> resulting in more articles from humanities disciplines being published in *NVSQ*. But this level of participation has precipitously declined since 2000, largely stemming from both the loss of financial incentives, and the exponential growth in social science research on the nonprofit sector, which has had the effect of crowding out scholarship from the humanities and normative theory.<sup>35</sup> *NVSQ* has continued to annually publish roughly the same number of humanities and normative theory articles over the past quarter century, averaging about 2 per year, but they have steadily declined as an overall percentage of the articles published by the journal, as it has greatly expanded the number of articles it annually publishes, and the social sciences have come to dominate the field.

## VOLUNTAS

*Voluntas* was founded in 1990 and was subsequently adopted as the official journal of the International Society for Third-sector Research (ISTR), the scholarly association founded in 1992. Its publishing record with regard to humanities and normative theory scholarship is remarkably similar to that of *NVSQ*. Which is to say, *Voluntas* also published a relatively large number of humanities and normative theory articles in the late 90s and 2000s, but that has since tapered off in both absolute and relative terms.

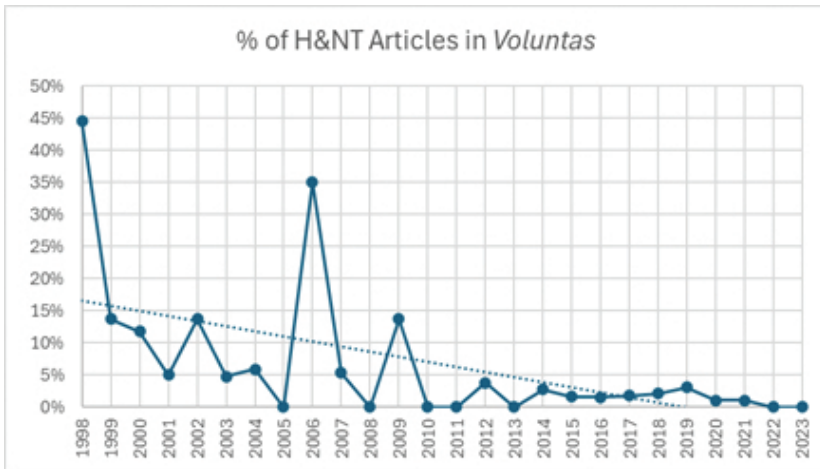
The first spike in humanities and normative theory articles in *Voluntas*, in the time frame covered by this review, occurred in 1998, when it published eight articles that examined the theoretical basis for the academic study of civil

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34 Bushouse et al., “A History of ARNOVA at Fifty,” 58S.

35 Megan LePere-Schloop and Rebecca Nesbit, “Disciplinary Contributions to Nonprofit Studies: A 20-Year Empirical Mapping of Journals Publishing Nonprofit Research and Journal Citations by Nonprofit Scholars,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52 (2023): 82S.

society and the nonprofit sector.<sup>36</sup> Several of these were substantive responses and counter-responses to Salamon and Anheier's seminal article, 'Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally',<sup>37</sup> which appeared in the third issue of that year. Altogether, the eight humanities and normative theory articles published by *Voluntas* in 1998 accounted for 45% of the articles that appeared in the journal that year.



36 James M. Ferris, "The Role of the Nonprofit Sector in a Self-Governing Society: A View from the United States," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 2 (June 1998): 137–51; Alan Fowler, "Whither the Third Sector? A Response to Estelle James," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (September 1998): 201–11; Charles C. Ragin, "Comments on 'Social Origins of Civil Society,'" *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (September 1998): 261–70; Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, "On Developing Comparative Nonprofit-Sector Theory: A Reply to Steinberg and Young, and Ragin," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (September 1998): 271–81; Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, "Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (September 1998): 213–48; Richard Steinberg and Dennis R. Young, "A Comment on Salamon and Anheier's 'Social Origins of Civil Society,'" *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 3 (September 1998): 249–60; Renate Wilson, "Philanthropy in 18th-Century Central Europe: Evangelical Reform and Commerce," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 1 (March 1998): 81–102; Henk E. S. Woldring, "State and Civil Society in the Political Philosophy of Alexis de Tocqueville," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 9, no. 4 (December 1998): 363–73.

37 Salamon, Lester M., and Helmut K. Anheier, "Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations: Official Journal of the International Society for Third-Sector Research* 9, no 3 (September 1998): 213–48.

A second major spike occurred in 2006, when *Voluntas* published seven political theory articles on civil society.<sup>38</sup> Most of these appeared in Issue 4 of that year, which focused on the topic of global civil society. Much like NVSQ, though, the presence of humanities and normative theory articles has since dwindled to an average of a little less than 2 per year. This amounts to an average of less than 2% of its total, as *Voluntas* also greatly expanded the number of social sciences articles it annually published during the same time.

## NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP

The journal *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* (*NML*), founded in 1990, publishes research quarterly on the “management, leadership, or governance of private nonprofit organizations.” Given its stated scope, we did not expect *NML* to publish a significant volume of humanities or normative theory research. True to that expectation, we find that *NML* articles primarily cover research on management, leadership, sociology, economics, organizational theory, psychology, etc. Common topics in the journal include, for example, motivations for volunteering,<sup>39</sup> leadership and organizational efficacy,<sup>40</sup> nonprofit

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38 Chris Armstrong, “Global Civil Society and the Question of Global Citizenship,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 348–56; Patrick Bond, “Civil Society on Global Governance: Facing Up to Divergent Analysis, Strategy, and Tactics,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 357–69; T. Corry, “Global Civil Society and Its Discontents,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 302–23; Hagai Katz, “Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 332–47; Ronaldo Munck, “Global Civil Society: Royal Road or Slippery Path?” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 324–31; Eghosa E. Osaghae, “Colonialism and Civil Society in Africa: The Perspective of Ekeh’s Two Publics,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 3 (September 2006): 233–45; Håkan Thörn, “Solidarity Across Borders: The Transnational Anti-Apartheid Movement,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 285–301.

39 Patrick C. Dwyer, Joyce E. Bono, Mark Snyder, Oded Nov, and Yair Berson, “Sources of Volunteer Motivation: Transformational Leadership and Personal Motives Influence Volunteer Outcomes,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 24, no. 2 (2013): 181–205.

40 Kristina Jaskyte, “Transformational Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Innovativeness in Nonprofit Organizations,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 15, no. 2 (2004): 153–68.

collaboration,<sup>41</sup> social entrepreneurship,<sup>42</sup> financial sustainability of nonprofit organizations,<sup>43</sup> and board governance.<sup>44</sup>

Moving closer to the humanities and normative theory, *NML* has published a small, but consistent thread of research with an ethical, moral, or values lens. This includes articles on ethical reasoning,<sup>45</sup> ethical leadership,<sup>46</sup> altruism,<sup>47</sup> normative values in strategic decision making,<sup>48</sup> and organizational values.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, *NML* regularly publishes articles on religious organizations or adherents. Such research, largely from the disciplines of sociology or organizational behavior, covers ministerial leadership,<sup>50</sup> leadership in religious nonprofits,<sup>51</sup> religious giving and volunteering,<sup>52</sup> and religious social-service organizations.<sup>53</sup>

Yet when seeking articles that are from the humanities or normative theory more strictly speaking, *NML* has published little over the last twenty-five years. Boerner offers a framework for defining artistic quality in nonprofit

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41 Beth Gazley and Chao Guo, "What Do We Know about Nonprofit Collaboration? A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 31, no. 2 (2020): 211–32.

42 Raymond Dart, "The Legitimacy of Social Enterprise," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 14, no. 4 (2004): 411–24.

43 Woods Bowman, "Financial Capacity and Sustainability of Ordinary Nonprofits," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 22, no. 1 (2011): 37–51.

44 Jonathan E. Beagles, "Institutional Logics and the Multiorganizational Governance Arrangements of Humanitarian INGOs," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 33, no. 1 (2022): 131–55.

45 Carole L. Jurkiewicz and Tom K. Massey Jr, "The Influence of Ethical Reasoning on Leader Effectiveness," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 9, no. 2 (1998): 173–86.

46 Bram Constandt and Annick Willem, "The Trickle-down Effect of Ethical Leadership in Nonprofit Soccer Clubs," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 29, no. 3 (2019): 401–17.

47 Harvey S. Rosen and Stephen T. Sims, "Altruistic Behavior and Habit Formation," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 21, no. 3 (2011): 235–53.

48 Valérie Michaud and Sonia Tello-Rozas, "Integrating Normative Values and/in Value Creation: A Strategic Management Decision Aid Tool for Social Enterprises' Values Practices," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 30, no. 3 (2020): 377–98.

49 Nancy E. Fenton and Sue Inglis, "A Critical Perspective on Organizational Values," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 17, no. 3 (2007): 335–47.

50 D. Martin Butler and Robert D. Herman, "Effective Ministerial Leadership," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 9, no. 3 (1999): 229–39.

51 Jeffrey Yip, Edmund Twohill, Chris Ernst, and Vijayan P. Munusamy, "Leadership in Faith-Based Nonprofits," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 20, no. 4 (2010): 461–72.

52 Beth Gazley, Brad R. Fulton, Wesley Mlsna Zebrowski, and David P. King, "Giving and Going: US Congregational Participation in Disaster Response," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 33, no. 1 (2022): 157–78.

53 James R. Vanderwoerd, "How Faith-Based Social Service Organizations Manage Secular Pressures Associated with Government Funding," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 14, no. 3 (2004): 239–62.

operas,<sup>54</sup> and Borkman chronicles the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous.<sup>55</sup> Two of the more promising efforts come from a pair of special issues in 2006. The first, on *The centrality of values, passions and ethics in the nonprofit sector*, describes itself as “one phase in an ongoing conversation between the basic science and humanistic disciplines”.<sup>56</sup> However, this issue contains no articles that would unambiguously fall within the humanities or normative theory—it defines humanistic disciplines to encompass the social sciences and features articles from economics, anthropology, and sociology.

The second special issue from that year, *An interdisciplinary conversation on research method best practices for nonprofit studies*, contains only one article from within the disciplines of the humanities and normative theory. In that article, Hammack reviews the legal and economic history of philanthropy in the U.S. during the twentieth century and then draws out lessons for contemporary nonprofit leaders.<sup>57</sup> Thus, while *NML* has an interest, albeit limited, in humanistic and normative perspectives, it includes very few articles from humanities and normative theory disciplines proper.

## JOURNAL OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The *Journal of Civil Society (JoCS)* was founded in 2005, a time when there was much theoretical discussion occurring over how, exactly, to approach the systematic study of civil society and the nonprofit sector. Viewing the field of philanthropic and nonprofit sector studies through a Popperian lens, these discussions may be said to have constituted its formative stage as an academic field, where the utility of various theoretical approaches were considered and debated. As Anheier declares in his introductory article to the inaugural issue of the journal:

The social science research agenda is expanding in many important directions. Theoretical, methodological and empirical advances made over the last two decades are opening up new research and policy questions that go well beyond the more traditional concerns of disciplines like sociology, economics and political science. One such development is the term civil society, which (re-) entered the social sciences only a few years

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54 Sabine Boerner, “Artistic Quality in an Opera Company: Toward the Development of a Concept,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 14, no. 4 (2004): 425–36.

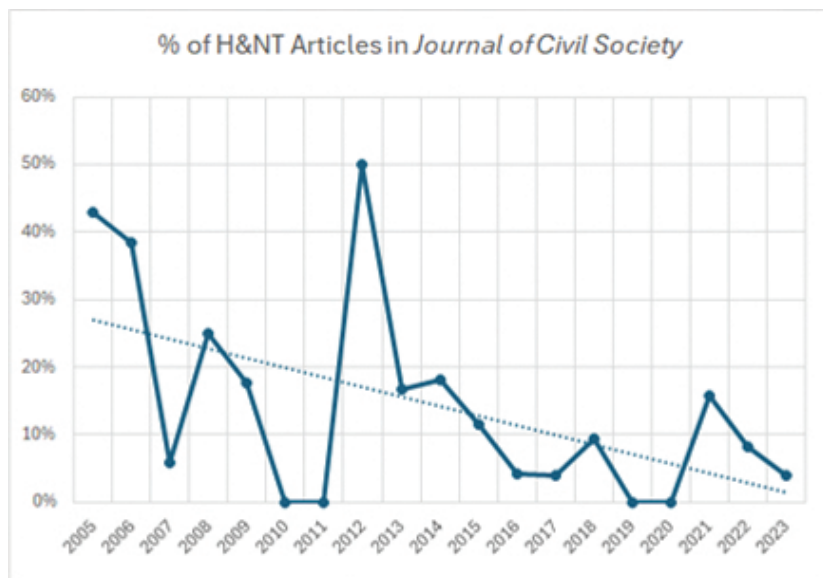
55 Thomasina Borkman, “Sharing Experience, Conveying Hope: Egalitarian Relations as the Essential Method of Alcoholics Anonymous,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 17, no. 2 (2006): 145–61.

56 Roger A. Lohmann, “Editor’s Notes,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 16, no. 4 (2006): 385–86.

57 David C. Hammack, “Historical Research for the Nonprofit Sector,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 16, no. 4 (2006): 451–66.

ago. The concept cuts across disciplinary boundaries and brings into focus some of the longstanding and nagging questions about the relationship between economy, polity, and society.<sup>58</sup>

Anheier's words were amply reflected in the articles published in the *JoCS* in its early years. In its first year, the journal published six political theory articles,<sup>59</sup> constituting 43% of the articles published that year. The following year, in 2006, it published five political theory articles,<sup>60</sup> which accounted for 38% of the articles published that year. The number of political theory articles under-



58 Helmut K. Anheier, "Introducing the Journal of Civil Society: An Editorial Statement," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no.1 (2005): 1–3.

59 ten Widmalm, "The Utility of Bonding Social Capital," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 1 (May 2005): 75–95; Volkhart F. Heinrich, "Studying Civil Society across the World: Exploring the Thorny Issues of Conceptualization and Measurement," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 3 (December 2005): 211–28; John Keane, "Eleven Theses on Markets and Civil Society," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 1 (May 2005): 25–34; Bruce Mazlish, "The Hi-Jacking of Global Society? An Essay," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 1 (May 2005): 5–17; Julianne Lutz Newton and William C. Sullivan, "Nature, Culture, and Civil Society," *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 3 (2005): 195–209.

60 Leonardo César Souza Ramos, "Civil Society in an Age of Globalization: A Neo-Gramscian Perspective," *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 2 (September 2006): 143–63; Mark N. Jensen, "Concepts and Conceptions of Civil Society," *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 1 (May 2006): 39–56; Mariya Y. Omelicheva, "Values and Ethics of Global Civil Society Actors: Insights from a Survey and Content Analyses," *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 3 (December 2006): 233–47; M. R. R. Ossewaarde, "Citizenship in Civil Society?" *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 3 (December 2006): 199–215; Melanie White, "The Dispositions of 'Good' Citizenship: Character, Symbolic Power and Disinterest," *Journal of Civil Society* 2, no. 2 (September 2006): 111–22.

went an overall decline after that, but then spiked again in 2012, with 10 normative theory articles, constituting half of the substantive articles published that year. This was largely the result of a special issue devoted to the theme of ‘Citizenship, Civil Society, and Development: Interconnections in a Global World’.

In Anheier’s 10 year retrospective of the *JoCS* in 2014, at the end of his tenure as editor of the journal, he reiterated the view that “civil society remains as contested and strategically located concept as it was then [in 2005], and, therefore, a very fruitful and intellectually lively field of research.”<sup>61</sup> After his departure, though, the number of political theory articles published by the *JoCS* inexorably declined. Between 2016 and 2024, the journal has averaged a little more than one political theory article per year. In total, out of the 381 full articles the *JoCS* has published since its founding, 50, or 13%, have come from normative theory and the humanities, primarily from political theory, but also with a smattering of historical approaches.

## OBSERVATIONS

In the late 90s and 2000s, the humanities and normative theory still had a small but meaningful presence in at least three of the major journals in the field of philanthropic studies: *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, and the *JoCS*. During this time, they published dozens of humanities and normative theory articles on philanthropy and civil society, often in special issues centered on various themes of history and political theory. In terms of their humanities and normative theory content, *NVSQ* primarily published history articles, and the *JoCS* published primarily political theory, while *Voluntas* published a mix of the two.

The overall pattern since the early 2010s, though, has been one of inexorable decline in terms of the number of humanities and normative theory articles published in all three of these journals. This is true in terms of the number of articles published, but especially in terms of their percentage of the total. In the past ten years, *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, and *JoCS* have still managed to publish, on average, a couple of humanities or normative theory articles per year, but this amounts to a very small and decreasing percentage of the total, consistently well below 5%, as the journals have greatly increased the total number of articles they annually publish.

## ADDITIONAL JOURNALS OF NOTE

In addition to the three major journals in the field of philanthropic studies examined above, we also identified several other journals that have philanthropy and/or civil society as their primary or secondary subject. These include:

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61 Helmut K. Anheier, “Civil Society Research: Ten Years On,” *Journal of Civil Society* 10, no. 4 (2014): 335–39.

- *Conversations on Philanthropy: Emerging Questions on Liberality and Society Thought* (2004-2014).
- *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* (2018 to present)
- *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* (2010 to present)
- *MAUSS International: Anti-Utilitarian Interventions in Social Sciences* (2021 to present).
- *Voluntaristics Review* (2015-2021)
- *Voluntary Sector Review* (2010 to present)

*Conversations on Philanthropy* was published annually between 2004 and 2014 by the Philanthropic Enterprise, Inc., a privately funded, charitable nonprofit institute for research and education on philanthropy. All 44 articles published in its 10-volume opus fit within the rubric of normative theory. Each volume is ordered around a particular theme, with authors having been invited to submit articles on that theme. These articles were not subjected to double-blind peer review, but each one is usually accompanied by three substantive essays that comment upon and critique the views expressed in the primary article.

The *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy and Civil Society* was founded by the Center for Muslim Philanthropy in 2017. This journal publishes semi-annual issues with research articles on matters pertaining to Muslim nonprofits, philanthropy, and voluntary action from a wide range of disciplines (e.g., history, political science, religious studies, sociology, public affairs, nonprofit management, business, and philanthropy). For example, it has published research on the social ethics of *zakat*,<sup>62</sup> the moral re-imagining of *waqf*,<sup>63</sup> and the aesthetics and ethics of Islamic giving.<sup>64</sup> In total, we identified 14 humanities and normative theory articles published by the journal over its six-year history.

Another noteworthy source of scholarship in the field of philanthropy and civil society is the *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* (*JNEL*). A review of the 97 research articles from its first ten volumes (2010-2021) used 261 keywords derived from the National Academic Centers Council (NACC) categories to analyze the content of these articles. Of these keywords, only two - “ethics and values” and “history and theories” - correspond to human-

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62 Danielle Widmann Abraham, “Zakat as Practical Theodicy: Precarity and the Critique of Gender in Muslim India,” *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 2, no. 1 (May 2018): 21.

63 Zara Khan, “Morally Reimagining the Waqf: Using a Classical Islamic Institution to Dismantle Structural Injustice,” *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 5, no. 1 (June 2021).

64 Ala Rabiha Alhourani, “Aesthetics and Ethics of Islamic Giving: Religious Moral Economy,” *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 8, no. 1 (June 2024).

ities and normative theory content. Ethics and values occurred in 14, or 2.75% of *JNEL*'s articles, while history and theories occurred in 12, or 2.36%.<sup>65</sup> In addition, in terms of the theories employed in *JNEL* articles, 2, or 5.88% use historical theories, while another 2, or 5.88% use critical theory or theories of race.<sup>66</sup> While the numbers on theory use are higher than those on keywords, the former only apply to the 26 theoretical articles published in *JNEL*. The literature review did not code the remaining 71 empirical articles in a similar fashion – we suspect that the empirical articles would be far less likely to use theories from the humanities or normative theory.

*MAUSS International: Anti-Utilitarian Interventions in Social Social Sciences* (*MAUSS*) is an online journal published by MAUSS (Mouvement anti-utilitariste en sciences sociales) a consortium of primarily French scholars mostly from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. The mission of *MAUSS*, as indicated by the subtitle of the journal, is to address what it sees as a utilitarian bias in the social sciences. It does so by supplementing it with an idea most famously promoted by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in his seminal book, *The Gift*.<sup>67</sup> In it, Mauss expounds upon the idea that 'the gift' is the 'total social fact' that forms an essential basis for all human interaction and society. Naturally, this approach also lends itself well to addressing the concepts of philanthropy and civil society. The mission of the journal, then, is to translate that Maussian theoretical approach to the social sciences. In the three issues it has published since 2021, each with between 12 and 22 articles, MAUSS has published 10 articles that meet the inclusion criteria of this literature review as primarily coming from the humanities and/or normative theory.<sup>68</sup>

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65 Heather L. Carpenter, Michael Taylor, Hunter Goodman, Jeannie Fox, and Claudia Petrescu, "A Content Analysis of the Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership: Results from Empirical and Theoretical Article Analysis," *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* 13, no. 1 (2023): 12.

66 Ibid., 11.

67 Marcel Mauss, *Essai Sur Le Don: Forme et Raison de L'échange Dans Les Sociétés Archaïques* (Paris: L'Année Sociologique, 1923).

68 Mary Douglas, "Our Gift Paradigm," *Mauss International* 1, no. 1 (October 2021): 59–61; David Le Breton and Carmen Ruschiesky, "The Gift of Laughter," *Mauss International* 1, no. 1 (October 2021): 207–20; Sari Hanafi, "Connecting Sociology to Moral Philosophy in the Post-Secularity Framework," *Mauss International* 1, no. 1 (October 2021): 250–70; Olli Pyyhtinen, "Marcel Hénaff and the Heterogeneity of Gift Practices," *Mauss International* 1, no. 1 (October 2021): 280–87; Philippe Chaniel, "Reciprocity Is Evil: Girard, Mauss, the Gift, and Love," *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 153–81; Lars Spuybroek, "The Grace Machine: Of Turns, Wheels and Limbs," *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 215–54; Camille Tarot, "Gift and Grace: A Family to Be Recomposed?" *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 255–81; Pierpaolo Donati, "Between the Human and the Social: The Third," *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 282–304; Mayfair Yang, "Mauss or Bataille? Gift, Sacrifice, and Feasting Across China and the Northwest Coast," *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 305–59; Mario A. Cedrini and Roberto Marchionatti, "On the Theoretical and Practical Relevance of the Concept of Gift to the Development of a Non-Imperialist Economics," *Mauss International* 2, no. 1 (2022): 451–81.

*Voluntaristics Review* showed promise as an interdisciplinary endeavor whose publications included a modest quantity of in-depth scholarship on subjects relevant to *Philanthropia*. In a review of its twenty-four volumes, we found, for example, treatments on historical and contemporary impacts of voluntary membership associations,<sup>69</sup> the evolution of philanthropy in Israel,<sup>70</sup> and theoretical discussions of nonprofits as the “moral dark energy” of society.<sup>71</sup> However, with the death of its founder and editor-in-chief, David Horton Smith (1939-2023), new work in the series may not be forthcoming, its last publication having appeared in 2021.

*Voluntary Sector Review (VSR)* is an international journal of third sector research policy and practice published by Policy Press in association with the Voluntary Sector Studies Network, a membership organization that promotes understanding of the UK voluntary sector by publishing research. In each issue, VSR generally publishes articles in each of three categories: research, policy, and practice. It has published nine articles that fit the inclusion criteria of this literature review: four from the perspective of religious studies,<sup>72</sup> four from normative theory,<sup>73</sup> and one from history.<sup>74</sup> Overall, though, this constitutes a very small percentage (~2%) of the approximately 450 articles it has published over its 14-year history.

There are a number of academic journals, besides the ones identified above, that have also published humanities and normative theory articles on philan-

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69 David Horton Smith, *The Global Historical and Contemporary Impacts of Voluntary Membership Associations on Human Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

70 Rachel Calipha and Benjamin Gidron, *The Evolution of the Israeli Third Sector* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

71 David Horton Smith, *Nonprofits Daring to Be Different as Moral Dark Energy Improving the World*, (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

72 Adam Dinham, “Re-Evaluating Value in Faith-Based Social Action,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 8, no. 2 (2017): 205–17; Shariq Siddiqui, “Muslim Philanthropy: Living Beyond a Western Definition,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 13, no. 3 (2022): 338–54; Andy Wier, “Faith-Based Social Action Below the Radar: A Study of the UK Charismatic-Evangelical Urban Church,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 5, no. 1 (2014): 29–45; Abi Woodward, “‘It Is Like Second Nature’: Informal Giving Among Pakistani Muslims in an English City,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 13, no. 3 (2022): 355–75.;

73 Malin Arvidson, Fergus Lyon, Stephen McKay, and Domenico Moro, “Valuing the Social? The Nature and Controversies of Measuring Social Return on Investment (SROI),” *Voluntary Sector Review* 4, no. 1 (2013): 3–18; Jenny Harrow and Tobias Jung, “The European Philanthropy Manifesto: ‘Clearly Needed and a Very Good Thing?’” *Voluntary Sector Review* 11, no. 3 (2020): 383–94; Lesley Hustinx and Lucas C. P. M. Meijjs, “Re-Embedding Volunteering: In Search of a New Collective Ground,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 2, no. 1 (2011): 5–21; Karine Levasseur and Sid Frankel, “Situating a Public Funding Experiment within the Landscape of Political Ideas about the Non-Profit Sector,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 8, no. 1 (2017): 67–88.

74 Robert Snape, “Voluntary Action and Leisure: An Historical Perspective 1830-1939,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 6, no. 2 (2015): 153-171.

thropy and civil society. Of these, the ones that have published three or more of these types of articles include:

*Historical Research* (3),<sup>75</sup> *History of Education Quarterly* (4),<sup>76</sup> *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* (3),<sup>77</sup> *La revue du M.A.U.S.S.* (5),<sup>78</sup> *Philosophy & Social Criticism*

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75 Anne Summers, “‘In a Few Years We Shall None of Us That Now Take Care of Them Be Here’: Philanthropy and the State in the Thinking of Elizabeth Fry,” *Historical Research* 67, no. 163 (June 1994): 134–42; Martin Hewitt, “The Travails of Domestic Visiting: Manchester, 1830–70,” *Historical Research* 71, no. 175 (June 1998): 196–227; Megan Clare Webber, “Troubling Agency: Agency and Charity in Early Nineteenth-Century London,” *Historical Research* 91, no. 251 (February 2018): 116–36.

76 Bruce A. Kimball, “‘Democratizing’ Fundraising at Elite Universities: The Discursive Legitimation of Mass Giving at Yale and Harvard, 1890–1920,” *History of Education Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2015): 164–89; Joe P. Dunn, “A Mission on the Frontier: Edward P. Tenney, Colorado College, the New West Education Commission, and the School Movement for Mormons and ‘Mexicans,’” *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2012): 535–58; Marybeth Gasman, “Rhetoric vs. Reality: The Fundraising Messages of the United Negro College Fund in the Immediate Aftermath of the Brown Decision,” *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2004): 70–94; Bruce A. Kimball and Benjamin Ashby Johnson, “The Beginning of ‘Free Money’ Ideology in American Universities: Charles W. Eliot at Harvard, 1869–1909,” *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2012): 222–50.

77 Eugene Heath, “Education, Commerce, and Public Spirit: Craig Smith’s Study of Adam Ferguson,” *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2020): 313–20; Craig Smith, “Reading Adam Ferguson and the Idea of Civil Society,” *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2020): 328–32; Jack A. Hill, “Reflections on Reading Adam Ferguson,” *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2020): 320–28.

78 Mark Anspach, “Le Sacrifice Qui Engendre le Don Qui l’Englobe,” *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* 5 (1995): 224–47; Guy Nicholas, “Resurgences Contemporaines Du Don Sacrificiel,” *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* 5 (1995); Alain Caille, “Sacrifice, Don et Utilitarisme: Notes sur la Théorie du Sacrifice,” *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* 5 (1995): 248–94; Alain Caille, “Ni Holisme ni Individualisme Méthodologique: Marcel Mauss et le Paradigme du Don,” *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* 8 (1996): 12–58; Philippe Chaniel, “L’Instant Fugitif ou la Société Prend: Le Don, la Partie et le Tout,” *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S.* 36 (2010): 343–60.

(7),<sup>79</sup> *Religions* (9),<sup>80</sup> *Social History* (3),<sup>81</sup> *The Economic History Review* (3),<sup>82</sup> and *The English Historical Review* (3).<sup>83</sup>

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79 Subrata Mitra, “For Whom the Bell Tolls? A ‘Vulnerability-Responsibility’ Model Based on Democratic and ‘Dignified’ Transactions,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 49, no. 5 (June 2023): 538–53; David Elstein, “Confucian Free Expression and the Threat of Disinformation,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 48, no. 4 (May 2022): 568–79; Volker Kaul, “Freedom of Speech in Liberal and Non-Liberal Traditions,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 48, no. 4 (May 2022): 460–72; Runya Qiaoan, “From Chinese Civil Society to Chinese Civil Sphere: A Conceptual Reconfiguration of the Space between State and Society That Facilitates Intellectual Debates,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 49, no. 5 (June 2023): 568–80; Victor Kempf, “Is There Another People? Populism, Radical Democracy and Immanent Critique,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 47, no. 3 (March 2021): 283–303; Volker Kaul, “Liberalism and the Problem of Domination,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 49, no. 5 (June 2023): 522–32; Sudipta Kaviraj, “Where Is the Breughel Village? Community and the Radical Tradition,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 47, no. 4 (May 2021): 408–25.

80 Rusty Roberson, “A Moderate Proposal: Jonathan Dickinson and Benjamin Franklin Debate Freedom, Conscience, and Consensus,” *Religions* 15, no. 1 (January 2024): 121; Rajni Gamage, “Buddhist Civilisational Populism in Sri Lanka: Colonial Identity Formation, Post-War Othering, and Present Crises,” *Religions* 14, no. 2 (February 2023): 278; Daniel F. Caner, “Clemency, A Neglected Aspect of Early Christian Philanthropy,” *Religions* 9, no. 8 (July 2018): 229; Byron R. Johnson, “How Religion Contributes to the Common Good, Positive Criminology, and Justice Reform,” *Religions* 12, no. 6 (June 2021): 402; Greg Melleuish and Stephen Chavura, “Newspaper Leaders as Moral Exhortation: Understanding the Rhetoric of Civil Religion in Colonial Australia,” *Religions* 14, no. 4 (April 2023): 452; Patricia Snell Herzog, Amy Strohmeier, David P. King, Rafia A. Khader, Andrew L. Williams, Jamie L. Goodwin, Dana R. H. Doan, and Bhengkosi Moyo, “Religiosity and Generosity: Multi-Level Approaches to Studying the Religiousness of Prosocial Actions,” *Religions* 11, no. 9 (August 2020): 446; Caleb Henry, “Benedict XVI on Education and Solidarity,” *Religions* 14, no. 1 (2023): 76; Paul Marshall, “Institutional Religious Freedom: An Overview and Defense,” *Religions* 12, no. 5 (2021): 364; Jamie Goodwin, “The Double Character of Cuban Protestantism and Philanthropy,” *Religions* 9, no. 9 (2018): 265.

81 Alan J. Kidd, “Charity Organisation and the Unemployed in Manchester c. 1870–1914,” *Social History* 9 (1984): 45–66; Alan J. Kidd, “Philanthropy and the ‘Social History Paradigm,’” *Social History* 21 (1992): 180–92; Simon Gunn, “The Ministry, the Middle Class and the ‘Civilizing Mission’ in Manchester, 1850–80,” *Social History* 21 (1996): 22–36.

82 Mary Elisabeth Cox, “Hunger Games: Or How the Allied Blockade in the First World War Deprived German Children of Nutrition, and Allied Food Aid Subsequently Saved Them,” *The Economic History Review* 68, no. 2 (2015): 600–631; Susannah Morris, “Market Solutions for Social Problems: Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century London,” *The Economic History Review* 54 (2001): 525; Patricia L. Garside, “The Impact of Philanthropy: Housing Provision and the Sutton Model Dwellings Trust, 1900–1939,” *The Economic History Review* 53 (2000): 742.

83 Shusaku Kanazawa, “‘To Vote or Not to Vote’: Charity Voting and the Other Side of Subscriber Democracy in Victorian England,” *The English Historical Review* 131, no. 549 (April 2016): 353–83; Michael Brown, “Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *The English Historical Review* 124 (2009): 1353; Frank Prochaska, “Protestant Dissent and Philanthropy in Britain, 1660–1914,” ed. Clyde Binfield, G.M. Ditchfield, and David L. Wykes, *The English Historical Review* 136, no. 581 (November 2021): 1061–62.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS IN PHILANTHROPIC STUDIES

Literature reviews on topics relevant to philanthropic studies follow a pattern similar to that seen in the journals described above in that, for the most part, they do not cover humanities or normative theory. We used the keywords ('literature' and 'review') to search the databases of *NVSQ* and *Voluntas*, and reviewed all publications of *Voluntaristics Review* to identify literature reviews of potential interest. We also incorporated publications from Google Scholar searches and our personal knowledge of the field. In total, these methods yielded a set of more than 70 reviews, literature reviews, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses on the study of philanthropy and civil society.

The majority of these papers are from social science disciplines. They cover subjects such as predictors for giving,<sup>84</sup> strategy in nonprofit organizations,<sup>85</sup> nonprofit advocacy,<sup>86</sup> and social entrepreneurship.<sup>87</sup> However, a small number of articles treat philanthropy and civil society from perspectives of the humanities or normative theory, either in full or in part. The most common type of article in this domain is historical and contains reviews of the historical impact of philanthropy,<sup>88</sup> the history of transnational voluntary associations,<sup>89</sup> and charitable campaigns of the late twentieth-century.<sup>90</sup> Other reviews of research

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84 René Bekkers and Pamala Wiepking, "Who Gives? A Literature Review of Predictors of Charitable Giving Part One: Religion, Education, Age and Socialisation," *Voluntary Sector Review* 2 (November 2011): 337–65.

85 Rozelia Laurett and João J. Ferreira, "Strategy in Nonprofit Organisations: A Systematic Literature Review and Agenda for Future Research," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations: Official Journal of the International Society for Third-Sector Research* 29, no. 5 (2018): 881–97.

86 Kevin D. Ward, Dyana P. Mason, Gowun Park, and Rachel Fyall, "Exploring Nonprofit Advocacy Research Methods and Design: A Systematic Review of the Literature," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52, no. 5 (2022).

87 Simon Teasdale, Enrico Bellazzecca, Anne De Bruin, and Michael J. Roy, "The (R) Evolution of the Social Entrepreneurship Concept: A Critical Historical Review," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52, no. 1\_suppl (April 2023): 212S–240S.

88 David Horton Smith, "The Global Historical and Contemporary Impacts of Voluntary Membership Associations on Human Societies," *Voluntaristics Review* 11 (2018): 1–125.

89 Thomas R. Davies, "History of Transnational Voluntary Associations," *Voluntaristics Review* 1, no. 4 (May 2016): 1–55.

90 Marco H. D. van Leeuwen and Pamala Wiepking, "National Campaigns for Charitable Causes: A Literature Review," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2013): 219–40.

in disciplines of interest to *Philanthropia* include those relating to religious studies,<sup>91</sup> the arts,<sup>92</sup> and critical studies.<sup>93</sup>

Numerous literature reviews, several of which are from *Voluntaristics Review*, also document the state of philanthropy research in particular countries and continents, including Africa,<sup>94</sup> China,<sup>95</sup> France,<sup>96</sup> Korea,<sup>97</sup> and the U.S.<sup>98</sup> Several of these reviews cover subjects within humanities and normative theory, including the historical development and cultural values of philanthropy,<sup>99</sup> but most of the analysis is from social science disciplines.

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91 Afshan Paarlberg, "Islam, Civil Society, and Pluralism: Literature Review," *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 5, no. 1 (June 2021).

92 Robert A. Stebbins, "Arts Nonprofits—Associations and Agencies," *Voluntaristics Review* 19 (2019).

93 Simon Teasdale, Enrico Bellazzecca, Anne De Bruin, and Michael J. Roy, "The (R) Evolution of the Social Entrepreneurship Concept: A Critical Historical Review," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 52, no. 1\_suppl (April 2023): 212S–240S.

94 Jacob Mwathi Mati, "Philanthropy in Contemporary Africa," *Voluntaristics Review* 6 (2017): 1–25.

95 David Horton Smith, "Review and Assessment of China's Nonprofit Sector after Mao," *Voluntaristics Review* 5 (2016): 1–25.

96 Laura Nirello and Lionel Prouteau, "The French Nonprofit Sector," *Voluntaristics Review* 13 (2018).

97 Sung-Ju Kim and Jin-Kyung Jung, *Korean Nonprofit/Non-Government Sector Research: A Literature Review and Analysis* (S.l.: BRILL, 2020), 1-72.

98 Karna Wong, Paul Ong, and Wenjuan Zheng, *American Philanthropy Literature Review* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA, 2016), 1-52.

99 Mati, "Philanthropy in Contemporary Africa," 1-25; Kim and Jung, *Korean Nonprofit/Non-Government Sector Research*, 1-72.

## OVERVIEW OF OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS ON PHILANTHROPY AND CIVIL SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HUMANITIES AND NORMATIVE THEORY

One of the major premises of this literature review is that there is a large amount of scholarship on philanthropy and civil society in humanities and normative theory related publications, much of which remains relatively unknown to scholars in the field of philanthropic studies. In this section, we highlight some of this scholarship. A comprehensive survey is impossible, of course, given the vast amount of material that exists, and the lack of a commonly employed nomenclature comparable to that employed in the social sciences that would facilitate a machine search. Nevertheless, it is possible to point to representative examples that form the tip of the iceberg of what is available.

### HUMANITIES

#### HISTORY

By far the largest volume of humanities scholarship on philanthropy and civil society is found in the academic discipline of history. In our survey, we documented 364 history titles published on philanthropy and civil society, including books, book chapters, journal articles, and dissertations. This is in addition to the 52 history articles published since 1998 in the major journals in the field of philanthropic studies - *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, *JoCS*, and *NML* - as described above.

Two literature reviews of historical scholarship in philanthropic studies were published in *NVSQ*, both in 1999, and each with a contrasting approach to the subject. Katz, in his review, gives an account of the history of the development of philanthropic studies as an academic field, with particular attention given to the prominent role played by historians in that development.<sup>100</sup> Hall, by contrast, reaches far beyond the historians who helped form the field to show that philanthropy and civil society has been a subject of serious historical study for well over a century.<sup>101</sup>

Hall traces the origin of historical scholarship on charity and philanthropy to the early 1890s, when doctoral students at Brown, New York University, and

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100 Stanley N. Katz, "Where Did the Serious Study of Philanthropy Come from, Anyway?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1999): 74–82.

101 Hall P. Dobkin, "The Work of Many Hands: A Response to Stanley N. Katz on the Origins of the 'Serious Study' of Philanthropy," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1999): 522–36.

Yale produced several dissertations on the subject.<sup>102</sup> Scholarly treatment of the history of philanthropy can be traced back even several centuries prior to this. Seldon's history of tithes,<sup>103</sup> first published over 400 years ago, for example, remains a valuable reference for scholars of philanthropy to this day. Kidd also provides a useful literature review of British historical scholarship on philanthropy as part of his discussion on historians' philosophy of approach to that subject.<sup>104</sup>

There have been a large number of scholarly histories of philanthropy published both inside and outside 'the field' of philanthropic studies. Bremner's history of domestic American philanthropy,<sup>105</sup> first published in 1960, and Curti's history of American international philanthropy,<sup>106</sup> first published in 1963, mark the beginning of the sustained treatment of philanthropy by American historians. In similar fashion, Veyne's history of what he terms 'euergetism' in ancient Greece and Rome,<sup>107</sup> first published in French in 1976,<sup>108</sup> inspired many other European historians to pursue research in the field of philanthropy. More recently, book length histories on philanthropy have been published by a number of prominent historians, including: Cavallo,<sup>109</sup>

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102 Charles Edward Dennis, *Charity among the Romans* (PhD diss., Brown University, Providence, RI, 1895); Julius W. Knapp, *Indiscriminate Charity* (PhD diss., New York University, n.d.); Walter Shepard Ufford, *Fresh Air Charity in the United States* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1897).

103 John Seldon, *The Historie of Tithes That Is, the Practice of Payment of Them. The Positive Lawes Made for Them. The Opinions Touching the Right of Them. A Review of It Is Also Annexed, Which Both Confirms It and Directs in the Use of It* (London: 1618).

104 Alan J. Kidd, "Philanthropy and the 'Social History Paradigm'," *Social History* 21, no. 2 (1996): 180–92.

105 Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

106 Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).

107 Paul Veyne and Oswyn Murray, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London: Allen Lane, 1990).

108 Paul Veyne, *Le Pain et le Cirque: Sociologie Historique d'un Pluralisme Politique* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1976).

109 Sandra Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin, 1541–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Geremek,<sup>110</sup> Hall,<sup>111</sup> Hammack,<sup>112</sup> Henderson,<sup>113</sup> Himmelfarb,<sup>114</sup> and Mollat.<sup>115</sup> In addition, a book collection of original historical essays edited by Friedman & McGarvie has been published.<sup>116</sup>

One of the most prolific countries in the world for historical scholarship on philanthropy and civil society, though, is Great Britain. British historians have authored numerous publications on philanthropy and civil society, including book length treatments by, for instance, Andrew,<sup>117</sup> Ben-Amos,<sup>118</sup> Binfield,<sup>119</sup> Grant,<sup>120</sup> Harris,<sup>121</sup> Jordan,<sup>122</sup> Jones,<sup>123</sup> Lloyd,<sup>124</sup> Luddy,<sup>125</sup> Owen,<sup>126</sup> Prochaska,<sup>127</sup>

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110 Bronisław Geremek, *Poverty: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

111 Peter Dobkin Hall, *The Organization of American Culture, 1700–1900: Private Institutions, Elites, and the Origins of American Nationality* (New York: New York University Press, 1982).

112 David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century* (Morningside ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

113 John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

114 Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of Late Victorians* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

115 Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

116 Lawrence Jacob Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

117 Donna T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989).

118 Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

119 Clyde Binfield, G. M. Ditchfield, and David L. Wykes, *Protestant Dissent and Philanthropy in Britain, 1660–1914* (Melton: Boydell & Brewer, Incorporated, 2019).

120 Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

121 Jose Harris, *Civil Society in British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

122 W. K. Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480–1660: The Aspirations and the Achievements of the Urban Society* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1974).

123 Gareth H. Jones, *History of the Law of Charity, 1532–1827* (Cambridge Studies in English Legal History; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

124 Sarah Lloyd, *Charity and Poverty in England, c. 1680–1820: Wild and Visionary Schemes* (Manchester, UK, and New York: Manchester University Press; distributed in the U.S. by Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

125 Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

126 David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

127 F. K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber, 1988).

Roberts,<sup>128</sup> Rochester,<sup>129</sup> and Smith.<sup>130</sup> The last two of these scholars, Colin Rochester (1942–2023) and Justin Davis Smith, were also instrumental in establishing the Voluntary Action History Society (VAHS) in 1991, which remains to this day the only humanities scholarly association in the world with philanthropy and civil society as its primary focus.

## OTHER HUMANITIES

An extensive amount of scholarship on philanthropy and civil society has also been published by scholars from other humanities disciplines. We found 89 titles on these subjects in the disciplines of philology, philosophy, linguistics, classics, literary studies, and anthropology, among others. Some of the earliest of these studies come from classical philologists, one of whom published an inaugural dissertation,<sup>131</sup> and another a monograph,<sup>132</sup> on the meaning and usage of the ancient Greek term *philanthropia*. Still another examines the terminology for gratitude in ancient Greek.<sup>133</sup> Linguists have also examined the terminology for giving in later ancient languages.<sup>134</sup>

Classicists have published a number of essay collections on the subjects of *philanthropia*,<sup>135</sup> *paideia*,<sup>136</sup> civic virtue,<sup>137</sup> and civil society in ancient Greece.<sup>138</sup>

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128 M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

129 Colin Rochester, *Rediscovering Voluntary Action* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

130 Justin Davis Smith, *100 Years of NCVO and Voluntary Action: Idealists and Realists* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

131 Siegfried Lorenz, *De Progressu Notionis Philanthropias* (inaugural dissertation, Leipzig: Thomas & Hubert, 1914), 59 p.

132 S. Tromp De Ruiter, “De Vocis Quae Est ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΑ Significatione Atque Usu,” *Mnemosyne* 59, no. 3 (1931): 271–306.

133 Joseph William Hewitt, “The Terminology of ‘Gratitude’ in Greek,” *Classical Philology* 22, no. 2 (1927): 142–61.

134 Patricia Ronan and Gerold Schneider, “Multi-Verbal Expressions of ‘Giving’ in Old English and Old Irish,” in *Corpus Linguistics Conference*, Liverpool, UK, July 20–23, 2009, 116, <https://doi.org/10.5167/UZH-24606>.

135 International Plutarch Society and José Ribeiro Ferreira, *Symposion and Philanthropia in Plutarch* (Coimbra: Classica Digitalia, Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos da Universidade de Coimbra, 2009).

136 Norman B. Sandridge, *Loving Humanity, Learning, and Being Honored: The Foundations of Leadership in Xenophon’s Education of Cyrus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

137 José Ribeiro Ferreira, *Philosophy in Society: Virtues and Values in Plutarch* (Leuven, Belgium, and Coimbra: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2008).

138 Mirko Canevaro and Benjamin D. Gray, eds., *The Hellenistic Reception of Classical Athenian Democracy and Political Thought*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Philanthropy has been a subject of philosophy for a very long time.<sup>139</sup> A number of prominent contemporary philosophers and philosophical scholars have also written on philanthropy and related concepts, including: Bataille,<sup>140</sup> Derrida,<sup>141</sup> Girard,<sup>142</sup> and Lampert.<sup>143</sup> We have been unable to locate much published scholarship on literary treatments of philanthropy, but there have been at least a couple dissertations written on philanthropy in myth<sup>144</sup> and literature.<sup>145</sup> Finally, several anthropologists, following in the footsteps of Mauss,<sup>146</sup> have written book length ethnographic studies of the gift that extensively utilize literary and historical sources.<sup>147</sup>

## RELIGION

Religion and philanthropy are intimately linked in numerous ways. Among many other connections, religious traditions develop intricate theologies of charity and justice (see below), spiritual and theological factors are a major source of motivations for giving and volunteering,<sup>148</sup> and congregations are one of the most prevalent nonprofit organizational types.<sup>149</sup> Yet scholarship on religion and philanthropy follows a pattern consistent with the two major themes of this literature review, namely: (a) relatively little of it is from disciplines in the humanities and normative theory—a high percentage of literature on religion and philanthropy comes from social science disciplines; and (b)

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139 Cf. Plato, *Definitions* 412e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1117b–1129a (Bekker); Francis Bacon, *The Essaies of Sr Francis Bacon Knight, the Kings Solliciter Generall* (London: John Beale, 1612), “On Goodness and Goodness of Nature.”

140 Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol. 1: Consumption* (New York and London: Zone Books; distributed by MIT Press, 1991).

141 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *De l'hospitalité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997).

142 René Girard, *Sacrifice* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011).

143 Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

144 Marty James John Šulek, “Gifts of Fire: An Historical Analysis of the Promethean Myth for the Light It Casts on the Philosophical Philanthropy of Protagoras, Socrates and Plato; and Prolegomena to Consideration of the Same in Bacon and Nietzsche” (dissertation, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2011).

145 Nancy D. Goldfarb, “‘Charity Never Faileth’: Philanthropy in the Short Fiction of Herman Melville” (dissertation, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2014).

146 Marcel Mauss, *Essai Sur Le Don: Forme et Raison de L'échange Dans Les Sociétés Archaïques*.

147 C. A. Gregory and Marilyn Strathern, *Gifts and Commodities*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Hau Books, 2015); Gadi Algazi and Valentin Groebner, *Negotiating the Gift: Premodern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

148 René Bekkers and Pamala Wiepking, “Who Gives? A Literature Review of Predictors of Charitable Giving Part One: Religion, Education, Age and Socialisation,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 2, no. 3 (2011): 337–65.

149 Brad R. Fulton, “26. Religious Organizations: Crosscutting the Nonprofit Sector,” in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, n.d.), 579–98

literature from the humanities and normative theory is often housed in disparate academic silos, disconnected from broader conversations on philanthropy. In the remainder of this section, we highlight some examples of research on religion and philanthropy consistent with the scope of *Philanthropia*—scholarship that would serve the academy and society more effectively if brought into conversation with scholars in the field of philanthropic studies.

The scholarly literature on religion and philanthropy includes publications that treat multiple religious traditions, such as Independent Sector's working papers on *Philanthropy, and the religious traditions*,<sup>150</sup> and an edited volume entitled *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions*.<sup>151</sup> More recent works include a book chapter, 'The Influence of Religion on Philanthropy across Nations',<sup>152</sup> and the book, *Religious giving: for love of God*,<sup>153</sup> which cover the three major monotheistic religions. Numerous publications also take a regional approach, examining religion and philanthropy in, for example, Asia,<sup>154</sup> Canada,<sup>155</sup> China,<sup>156</sup> Cuba,<sup>157</sup> and the U.S.<sup>158</sup>

Scholars also probe the link between religion and philanthropy in specific religious traditions. Liberation theology, a predominantly Catholic theological current, focuses on freedom from oppressive and exploitative structures, including through religious figures such as Bartolome de Las Casas.<sup>159</sup> The book *Charity*<sup>160</sup> interprets charity as an expression of Christian faith in God. *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, covers a broad array of topics

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150 Independent Sector and United Way Institute, *Philanthropy, and the Religious Tradition: Spring Research Forum Working Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1989).

151 Warren Frederick Ilchman, Stanley Nider Katz, and Edward L. Queen, *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

152 Henrietta Grönlund and Anne Birgitta Pessi, "The Influence of Religion on Philanthropy across Nations," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy*, ed. Pamala Wiepking and Femida Handy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015),

153 David H. Smith, *Religious Giving: For Love of God* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

154 K. E. Kuah-Pearce and J. S. Cornelio, "Introduction: Religious Philanthropy in Asia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 43, no. 4 (2015): 349–355.

155 I. E. Berger, "The Influence of Religion on Philanthropy in Canada," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 17, no. 2 (2006): 110–127.

156 X. Du, W. Jian, Y. Du, W. Feng, and Q. Zeng, "Religion, the Nature of Ultimate Owner, and Corporate Philanthropic Giving: Evidence from China," *Journal of Business Ethics* 123, no. 2 (2014): 235–256.

157 J. Goodwin, "The Double Character of Cuban Protestantism and Philanthropy," *Religions* 9, no. 9 (2018): 265.

158 D. P. King, "Religion, Charity, and Philanthropy in America," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2018.

159 Gustavo Gutierrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, Reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2003 [1973]).

160 Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

and periods related to Islam and philanthropy.<sup>161</sup> Other scholars of Islamic philanthropy research concepts such as zakat,<sup>162</sup> *waqf*, *sadakah*, and charity. Orthodox Christianity is the subject of *Philanthropy and Social Compassion in Eastern Orthodox Tradition*<sup>163</sup> and ‘An Orthodox View of Philanthropy and Church Diaconia’.<sup>164</sup>

On the theme of religious ethics and practical theology, *Religion and Poverty: Monotheistic Responses around the Globe*<sup>165</sup> takes a cross-religion approach to the topic. A similar piece looks at multiple religious traditions’ attempts to ameliorate poverty through the vehicle of development organizations.<sup>166</sup> Several scholars of Christianity, such as Sider et al.<sup>167</sup> and Wolterstorff<sup>168</sup> highlight justice as foundational to religious ethics of human rights and philanthropy. On a related note, Padilla and others write about “holistic” approaches, both spiritual and material, to missions, relief, and development.<sup>169</sup> Or, to take an example from another religious tradition, Dorf develops

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161 Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, Amy Singer, and University of Michigan Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

162 Danielle Widmann Abraham, “Zakat as Practical Theodicy: Precarity and the Critique of Gender in Muslim India,” *Journal of Muslim Philanthropy & Civil Society* 4, no. 2 (2020): 120–48, <https://doi.org/10.18060/24680>; Abdul Ghafar Ismail, Rose Abdullah, and Muhammad Hasbi Zaenal, eds., *Islamic Philanthropy: Exploring Zakat, Waqf, and Sadaqah in Islamic Finance and Economics* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022); Yair Lev, *Charity, Endowments, and Charitable Institutions in Medieval Islam* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Muhammad Zulfikar, *Zakah: According to the Quran & Sunnah*, 1st ed. (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2011).

163 Matthew J. Pereira, ed., *Philanthropy and Social Compassion in Eastern Orthodox Tradition: Papers of the Sophia Institute Academic Conference* (New York: Theotokos Press, December 2009).

164 Miltiadis Vantsos and Marina Kiroudi, “An Orthodox View of Philanthropy and Church Diaconia,” *Christian Bioethics* 13, no. 3 (2007): 251–268. <https://doi.org/10.1093/13803600701732082>.

165 Susan Crawford Sullivan, Stephen Offutt, and Shariq Ahmed Siddiqui, *Religion and Poverty: Monotheistic Responses Around the Globe* (New York: Routledge, 2024).

166 Emma Tomalin, “Religions, Poverty Reduction and Global Development Institutions,” *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 1 (2018): Article 1.

167 Ronald J. Sider, Eugene Rivers, Charles W. Colson, and John J. DiIulio Jr., *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

168 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

169 Carlos René Padilla, *What Is Integral Mission?* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2021); Carlos René Padilla, Tom Sine, and Elaine Storkey, “Integral Mission and Its Historical Development,” in *Justice, Mercy and Humility*, ed. Tim Chester (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003); Vinay Samuel, *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2000).

a Jewish social ethic that seeks to improve the world while addressing topics such as poverty, family, and war.<sup>170</sup>

Religious history is another essential subcategory of research at the intersection of philanthropy and religion. Substantial bodies of historical research exist that could be brought into conversation with the mainstream of philanthropic studies. *Charity in Islamic Societies* is one such broad-ranging historical work.<sup>171</sup> Likewise, Gardner presents an historical-theological perspective on organized charity's roots in Rabbinic Judaism.<sup>172</sup> More targeted pieces on Islam detail, for instance, the development of Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia,<sup>173</sup> and the practice of charity as seen in medieval Islamic hospitals.<sup>174</sup> Specific works on Judaism cover the influence of the Jewish leader Sir Moses Montefiore on philanthropy in the nineteenth-century,<sup>175</sup> and stages in the evolution of philanthropy in modern Israel.<sup>176</sup>

The study of Christian history is a rich source of research on religion and philanthropy from various eras in the last two millennia. Early church scholars examine topics such as 'Philanthropy and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology',<sup>177</sup> and alms in social and theological contexts as an integral part of atonement and future reward.<sup>178</sup> Research on later periods includes Reformation efforts to provide more than "mere" charity,<sup>179</sup> the Protestant

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170 Elliot N. Dorff, *To Do the Right and the Good: A Jewish Approach to Modern Social Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002); Elliot N. Dorff, *The Way Into Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2007).

171 Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

172 Gregg E. Gardner, *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

173 Amal Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia* (Leiden: BRILL, 2013).

174 N. A. G. Fancy, "The Medieval Islamic Hospital: Medicine, Religion, and Charity," *Nazariyat* 3, no. 1 (2016): 136–146.

175 Abigail Green, "Rethinking Sir Moses Montefiore: Religion, Nationhood, and International Philanthropy in the Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 3 (2005): 631–658.

176 Hagai Katz and Israel Greenspan, "Giving in Israel: From Old Religious Traditions to an Emerging Culture of Philanthropy," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy*, ed. Pamala Wiekping and Femida Handy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 316–337.

177 Helen Rhee, "Philanthropy and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 1–21.

178 David J. Downs, *Alms: Charity, Reward, and Atonement in Early Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

179 Carter Lindberg, *Beyond Charity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

missions movement as a fore-runner of contemporary philanthropy,<sup>180</sup> and religious support for the Civil Rights movement.<sup>181</sup>

Religion intersects with philanthropic studies in various other ways. For example, theologically motivated disinterested giving (e.g., the Hindu conception of *dān*) has influenced contemporary notions of socially responsible philanthropy to generate new philanthropic practices.<sup>182</sup> Christian theology shapes the character of religious humanitarian organizations.<sup>183</sup> Muslim philanthropy, which “should be interpreted in a discursive tradition” challenges definitions of philanthropy that are unduly influenced by Western scientific philanthropy.<sup>184</sup>

When taken as a whole, this illustrative survey of literature on religion and philanthropy leads to several observations. First of all, the scholarly literature on religion, philanthropy and civil society that exists in the humanities and normative theory is vast. In this literature review, we identified 88 such dissertations, books, and book chapters. These scholarly works come mostly from the disciplines of history, theology, philosophy, and anthropology, and cover most every major religious tradition and geographic region in the world. The crucial influence of religion on philanthropy and civil society is also already well understood in the social sciences. But again, it tends to overshadow the rich literature in this regard from the humanities and normative theory in the scholarly literature of philanthropic studies.

### *NORMATIVE THEORY*

Normative theory stands in contrast to the social sciences in terms of its overall approach to the study of human society. For whereas the human and social sciences focus on how people and societies *are*, normative theory focuses on how they ideally *should be*. Normative theory has two major branches: ethics and political philosophy. Ethics is the study of how people should behave, as moral agents. Political philosophy, by comparison, is the study of how society should best be ordered so as to produce a ‘virtuous’ citizenry. Aspects

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180 Heather D. Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Amanda Porterfield, “Protestant Missionaries: Pioneers of American Philanthropy,” in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed. Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49–70.

181 Rosetta E. Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

182 Erica Bornstein, “The Impulse of Philanthropy,” *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 4 (2009): 622–651.

183 Lisa C. Thaut, “The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy,” *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 20, no. 4 (2009): 319–350.

184 Shariq Siddiqui, “Muslim Philanthropy: Living Beyond a Western Definition,” *Voluntary Sector Review* 13, no. 3 (2022): 338–354.

of normative theory are also sometimes found in anthropology, legal theory, and religious studies.

## ETHICS

There is a rather large body of scholarly literature on the ethics of philanthropy. We found 93 books, book chapters, and articles on this subject, not including the four articles published in the major journals in the field of philanthropic studies.<sup>185</sup> Philanthropy used to be a central concern of moral philosophy, with many prominent philosophers touching on the subject in their works on ethics: e.g. Aristotle,<sup>186</sup> Seneca,<sup>187</sup> Hume,<sup>188</sup> Smith,<sup>189</sup> Kant,<sup>190</sup> Schopenhauer,<sup>191</sup> Nietzsche,<sup>192</sup> Emerson,<sup>193</sup> Thoreau,<sup>194</sup> Spencer,<sup>195</sup> and Comte.<sup>196</sup> Moral philosophy largely lost interest in philanthropy as a subject of inquiry during the 20th century, though; many standard textbooks on ethics dating from that time make no reference to it. With the formation of philanthropy as a field of study in the late 20th century, though, there has been a resurgence of interest in its ethical dimensions among moral philosophers.

One of the more prominent ethicists to renew academic interest in the ethics of philanthropy is Peter Singer, who wrote an article on the subject early in his career in response to the refugee crisis and famine then occurring

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185 Peter Halfpenny, "Economic and Sociological Theories of Individual Charitable Giving: Complementary or Contradictory?" *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 10, no. 3 (1999): 197–215; William W. Clohesy, "Altruism and the Endurance of the Good," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 11, no. 3 (2000): 237–253; Nancy D. Goldfarb, "Josiah Royce's Philosophy of Loyalty as Philanthropy," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2011): 720–739; Annie Herro and Franklin Obeng-Odoom, "Foundations of Radical Philanthropy," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 30, no. 4 (2019): 881–890.

186 Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. 3rd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019.

187 Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *On Benefits, Addressed to Aebutius Liberalis*, trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: George Bell and Sons, 2010).

188 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: Millar, 1751).

189 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1759).

190 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue: Part II of The Metaphysics of Morals*, Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964).

191 Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, rev. ed., trans. E. F. J. Payne, ed. David E. Cartwright (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995).

192 Bernard Arthur Owen Williams, *Nietzsche: The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

193 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, Second Series*, ch. V, "Gifts" (S.I.: Duke Classics, 2021).

194 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. W. H. Dircks, ch. 1, § "Philanthropy" (London and Toronto: Walter Scott; W. J. Gage, 1888).

195 Herbert Spencer, *The Data of Ethics* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879).

196 Auguste Comte, *System of Positive Polity, or Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity*, vol. 2 (Paris: Carilian-Goeyre and Vor Dalmont, 1852).

in what would become Bangladesh.<sup>197</sup> He went on to author several books on the moral obligations of philanthropy, primarily stemming from a utilitarian perspective.<sup>198</sup> In the process, he became one of the chief proponents of what's come to be termed 'effective altruism'.<sup>199</sup> Another prominent figure in the effective altruism movement is William MacAskill, who has written two books on the subject.<sup>200</sup>

Another major approach to moral philosophy's study of philanthropy is termed virtue ethics. Book length treatments on this approach have been authored by, for example, Gunderman,<sup>201</sup> and Martin.<sup>202</sup> Some other moral philosophers employ ethical naturalism in their approach to philanthropy, such as Wilson,<sup>203</sup> Ignatieff,<sup>204</sup> and Tenzin Gyatso.<sup>205</sup> Still others employ a deontological framework in their ethical analysis of philanthropy, such as Hallie,<sup>206</sup> Hill,<sup>207</sup> and Radovanović.<sup>208</sup> Rand has even penned an ethical critique of philanthropy from the perspective of ethical egoism.<sup>209</sup>

There are a great many published professional codes of ethics for people working in the field of philanthropy. One of the more notable of these is the one initially penned by Independent Sector in 1991.<sup>210</sup> Since then, nearly every

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197 Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (n.d.): 229.

198 Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save* (New York: Random House, 2010).

199 Peter Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism Is Changing Ideas about Living Ethically* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

200 William MacAskill, *Doing Good Better: Effective Altruism and a Radical New Way to Make a Difference* (London: Guardian Books; Faber & Faber, 2016); William MacAskill, *Doing Good Better: How Effective Altruism Can Help You Help Others, Do Work That Matters, and Make Smarter Choices About Giving Back* (New York: Avery, 2019).

201 Richard Gunderman, *We Make a Life by What We Give* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

202 Mike W. Martin, *Virtuous Giving: Philanthropy, Voluntary Service, and Caring* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

203 James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: Free Press; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada; New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993).

204 Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers: An Essay on Privacy, Solidarity, and the Politics of Being Human* (New York: Viking, 1985).

205 Tenzin Gyatso, *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*, Trade pbk. ed. (Toronto: Signal, 2012).

206 Philip P. Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon, and How Goodness Happened There*, 1st Harper Torchbooks ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

207 Thomas E. Hill Jr., "Duties and Choices in Philanthropic Giving: Kantian Perspectives," in *The Ethics of Giving: Philosophers' Perspectives on Philanthropy*, 13–39 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018).

208 Bojana Radovanović, "Kant's Moral Theory as a Guide in Philanthropy," *Filozofija i Društvo* 33, no. 3 (2022): 585–600.

209 Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden, *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: Signet/New American Library, 1970).

210 Independent Sector, *Ethics and the Nation's Voluntary and Philanthropic Community: Obedience to the Unenforceable: A Statement* (Washington, DC: Independent Sector, 1991).

profession within the nonprofit sector has published codes of ethics for their particular fields of endeavour. Of course, the ethical value of such codes has been seriously questioned, most trenchantly by Surkhe.<sup>211</sup> There is also a large amount of scholarly literature on applied ethics in philanthropy, including book length works on corporate social responsibility,<sup>212</sup> as well as the ethics of donors,<sup>213</sup> fundraisers,<sup>214</sup> and those working in the nonprofit sector.<sup>215</sup> Besides these book length treatments, there is a veritable cornucopia of scholarly literature on these subjects in articles and book chapters.

### POLITICAL THEORY

Civil society has an extremely long history in political thought, beginning with Aristotle,<sup>216</sup> and continuing on through Cicero,<sup>217</sup> Hooker,<sup>218</sup> Hobbes,<sup>219</sup> Locke,<sup>220</sup> Ferguson,<sup>221</sup> and de Tocqueville.<sup>222</sup> Despite this long history, the

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211 Henry C. Surkhe, "An Ethical Desert," *Philanthropy Monthly* (September 1991): 5–15.

212 David Crowther and Shahla Seifi, eds., *Redefining Corporate Social Responsibility, Developments in Corporate Governance and Responsibility* (United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing, 2018); Samuel O. Idowu, ed., *Current Global Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility: In the Era of Sustainable Development Goals, CSR, Sustainability, Ethics & Governance* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

213 William Damon and Susan Verducci, *Taking Philanthropy Seriously: Beyond Noble Intentions to Responsible Giving, Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Patricia M. L. Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar, eds., *Giving Well: The Ethics of Philanthropy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

214 Janice Gow Pettey, ed., *Ethical Fundraising: A Guide for Nonprofit Boards and Fundraisers* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008); David H. Smith, *Good Intentions: Moral Obstacles and Opportunities, Philanthropic and Nonprofit Studies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); Marianne G. Briscoe, *Ethics in Fundraising: Putting Values into Practice, New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994); Marilyn Fischer, *Ethical Decision Making in Fund Raising, The NSFRE/Wiley Fund Development Series* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000).

215 Gary M. Grobman, *A Practical Guide to Ethics in Your Nonprofit Organization* (Harrisburg, PA: White Hat Communications, 2014); Gary M. Grobman, *Ethics in Nonprofit Organizations: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Harrisburg, PA: White Hat Communications, 2022).

216 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

217 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Re Publica, De Legibus*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (London: William Heinemann, 1928).

218 Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (London: Da Capo Press, 1971).

219 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme, et Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London: Crooke, 1651).

220 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Crawford Brough Macpherson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1690).

221 Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. [no editor identified], with an introduction (1767; place of publication not identified: publisher not identified, n.d.).

222 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Historical-Critical Edition of De La Démocratie En Amérique*, bilingual French-English ed., ed. Eduardo Nolla, trans. James T. Schleifer (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010).

scholarly literature on civil society was almost completely absent from political theory during most of the 19th and 20th centuries. There were a few scholars in the mid-20th century who considered closely related concepts, such as Cornuelle<sup>223</sup> and Olson,<sup>224</sup> but who employed slightly different terminology. The concept of civil society was hastily revived, though, after prominent east European dissidents, such as Havel,<sup>225</sup> began employing the term to formulate their opposition to Communist regimes in the 1980s. This created a flurry of interest among prominent political theorists such as Bellah,<sup>226</sup> Cohen,<sup>227</sup> Edwards,<sup>228</sup> Fukuyama,<sup>229</sup> Gellner,<sup>230</sup> O’Connell,<sup>231</sup> Seligman,<sup>232</sup> and Walzer.<sup>233</sup> Altogether, we found 165 books, book chapters and articles on political theory relating to civil society, not counting those found in the major journals of the field of philanthropic studies.

This renewed scholarly interest in the concept of civil society provided much of the background for scholars in the field of philanthropic studies, such as Salamon and Anheier, to construct their theories of the nonprofit sector. As was seen in our review of the major journals of the field, though, interest in the normative aspects of civil society theory peaked in the early 2010s, and has since gone into steep decline. Nevertheless, the baton has been largely picked up by scholars elsewhere. Several books on philanthropy and civil society from the perspective of political theory have been written by authors associated with Stanford University’s Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, including

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223 Richard C. Cornuelle, *Reclaiming the American Dream: The Role of Private Individuals and Voluntary Associations* (New York: Random House, 1965); Richard C. Cornuelle, *De-Managing America: The Final Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Richard C. Cornuelle, *Healing America* (New York: Putnam, 1983).

224 Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, *Harvard Economic Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

225 Václav Havel, *Living in Truth: Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, ed. Jan Vladislav, paperback ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

226 Robert N. Bellah, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

227 Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 1st MIT Press paperback ed., *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

228 Michael Edwards, *Civil Society*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020).

229 Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

230 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, 1st American ed. (New York, NY: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1994).

231 Brian O’Connell and John W. Gardner, *Civil Society: The Underpinnings of American Democracy*, *Civil Society* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

232 Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

233 Michael Walzer, “The Idea of Civil Society,” *Dissent* (Spring 1991): 293–304.

Callahan,<sup>234</sup> Lechterman,<sup>235</sup> and Reich.<sup>236</sup> *The International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* also contains many substantive entries on political theory and history as they relate to civil society.<sup>237</sup>

### OTHER NORMATIVE THEORY

There are numerous and varied scholarly writings on normative theories of philanthropy and civil society that don't fit within the silos of ethics or political theory. We identified 71 books, book chapters, and articles that fall under this category. The most represented academic fields in this category are branches of legal theory, anthropology, and sociology, particularly those that employ historical, literary, philosophical, and sacred texts as the empirical basis of their analysis.

The academic field with the greatest representation within this category, though, is anthropology; particularly the branch that follows the direction established by the work of Marcel Mauss. There have been several books written in this vein, including those by Caille,<sup>238</sup> Davis,<sup>239</sup> Godelier,<sup>240</sup> Hubert & Mauss,<sup>241</sup> Komter,<sup>242</sup> Nicolas,<sup>243</sup> and Weiner.<sup>244</sup> There have also been a number

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234 David Callahan, *The Givers: Wealth, Power, and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, 2018).

235 Theodore M. Lechterman, *The Tyranny of Generosity: Why Philanthropy Corrupts Our Politics and How We Can Fix It* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022).

236 Rob Reich, *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy Is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

237 Helmut K. Anheier, Stefan Toepler, and Regina List, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society, Springer Nature eReference* (New York: Springer, 2010).

238 Alain Caillé, *Anthropologie Du Don, Le Tiersparadigme* (Paris: La Découverte, 2000); Alain Caillé, *Extensions du domaine du don: demander, donner, recevoir, rendre: essai, Questions de société* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2019).

239 John Davis, *Exchange, Concepts in Social Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

240 Maurice Godelier, *L'énigme du don* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

241 Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

242 Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

243 Guy Nicolas, *Du don rituel au sacrifice suprême, Recherches (Centre national de la danse (France))* (Paris: La Découverte : M.A.U.S.S., 1996).

244 Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

of book collections in this regard, including those edited by Baumgarten,<sup>245</sup> James & Allen,<sup>246</sup> Osteen,<sup>247</sup> and Vandavelde.<sup>248</sup>

## DISCUSSION

In the introduction to this literature review, we advanced a couple of hypotheses on the state of the humanities and normative theory in the field of philanthropic studies. The first of these is that the humanities and normative theory are under-represented in the standard literature of philanthropic studies. The second was that a substantial body of humanities and normative theory scholarship on philanthropy and civil society exists beyond the standard works usually cited in the field of philanthropic studies. There is no absolute formula for determining the degree to which these two hypotheses are true, but our findings strongly support both notions.

The status of the humanities and normative theory in the scholarly literature of philanthropic studies is best seen in the major academic journals of the field. Academic journals are an excellent barometer for measuring the current state of scholarship in any given academic field. Assuming that to be the case, our literature survey has shown that the humanities and normative theory once had a relatively small, but significant presence in at least three of the major journals of philanthropic studies: *NVSQ*, *Voluntas*, and *JoCS*. They played a pivotal role in the late 1990s to the early 2010s in terms of the formation of the field of philanthropic studies. In the case of *NVSQ*, historians showed how the field of philanthropic studies as an academic discipline was to a large degree discovered by historians. In the *JoCS*, by comparison, political theorists debated the utility of the various theories being used to explain the existence of the civil society sector. In the past 20 years, though, this presence has diminished to almost nothing. This, despite the stated intentions of at least some of the editors of these leading journals to include more scholarship from the humanities and normative theory.

Our survey has also revealed the existence of a substantial amount of humanities and normative theory scholarship on philanthropy and civil society outside of the major journals. We discovered a variety of books, book chapters, articles, and dissertations from history (364 items), other humanities (89 items), religion (43 items), ethics (93 items), political theory (179 items), and other aspects of normative theory (71 items). These publications are over and

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245 Albert I. Baumgarten, *Sacrifice in Religious Experience, Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

246 Marcel Mauss: *A Centenary Tribute*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998).

247 Mark Osteen, *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines, Routledge Studies in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

248 Antoon Vandavelde, *Gifts and Interests, Morality and the Meaning of Life* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

above the 150 or so humanities and normative theory articles published in the major journals of the field of philanthropic studies: *NVSQ* (49 items), *Voluntas* (56 items), and *JoCS* (43 items).

In sum, despite their multifaceted value, the humanities and normative theory are seriously underrepresented in the current standard literature on philanthropy and civil society, and are now even less represented than in the recent past. Moreover, much of the high-caliber research in this regard that does exist in other academic outlets is disconnected from the field of philanthropic studies. Thus, the time is right, or even overdue, for innovative initiatives to revivify the humanities and normative theory in our field. Responding to this challenge, we are founding this journal with the mission of advancing the understanding of philanthropy and civil society from the perspective of the humanities and normative theory. *Philanthropia* strives to provide a platform in which scholars from disciplines such as history, philosophy, literature, religion, classics, theology, linguistics, anthropology, ethics, and political theory can examine and exchange ideas that will advance our understanding of philanthropy and civil society. Please join us as we work toward that goal!

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## Burckhardt, Hesse and Nietzsche: Which Pathway?

### ABSTRACT

*This article will touch on the critique of the modern liberal project by Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse—such a critique of liberal modernity tends to be seen as a form of conservatism. But, Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse understood the meaning of conservatism (each and all drawing from the classical ethos and tradition) in different ways and for different reasons. Each of them, also, had a concern for what it meant to care for the human journey (*philanthropos*) in diverging ways and for different reasons. This essay will reflect on their shared questioning of the modern project and its notions of the self and society but their diverging answers and prognosis to doubts and diagnosis of the modern and, in our ethos, postmodern project.*

The classical tradition held high the notion of “*philia*” as a way of knowing the self and bringing into being a just society (or *polis*). But such a way of friendship presupposed an understanding of what it meant to be human (“**anthropos**”). The caring, being the midwife or actualizing the potential of the deeper meaning of the family (“*oikos*”), larger community (“*paraoikos*”) and civic virtues (“*politikoi aretēs*”) in the city state (“*polis*”) meant there was a deeper common unity that humanity shared simply because they participated in being human. The meaning of “*philia*” when wed and united with “*sophia*”, so the classical vision proposed, evoked the notion that friends drawn to and guided by Lady Wisdom, would enrich and clarify the meaning of the human longing and a “*telos*” or focus for our all too human journey. So, *philanthropos* presupposed *philosophia*, a decided upward ascent and overcoming of lower desires and appetites for a higher and greater good and end. The coming to be of liberalism as an ideology (birthed by the protestant reformation) brought into being a creed of sorts of the centrality of liberty, equality, individuality and, to some degree, an open-ended version of the self. Many thinkers of a more thoughtful conservative bent realized such a credo would, in time, lower standards, lead to fragmentation and breed a dumbing down of levels of being. There were three philosophers, historians and literary thinkers that embodied and dared to critique the rise of liberalism as the emerging orthodoxy of the West (Jacob Burckhardt, Friedrich Nietzsche and Hermann Hesse) and it is

to these three thinkers this essay will reflect upon. Each of these thinkers was committed to understanding, in their different ways, what it meant to be both *philanthropic* and *philosophic*. If time and space were fuller, I would sit with Werner Jaeger's unpacking of the Greek notion of "*paideia*" and highlight how classical Christianity internalized such notions as "*eunomis*", "*sympnoia*" and "*synkrasis*". These classical ideas are spelled out in a compact manner in Jaeger's *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*. But, to Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse I now turn.

Hermann Hesse mentioned, in the final paragraph of his "Foreword" to *If the War Goes On...*,<sup>1</sup> a suggestive lead to understanding his life journey and a portal of sorts into those things that held him. And, I quote:

I must say: three strong influences, at work throughout my life, have made me what I am. These are the Christian and almost totally unnationalistic spirit of the home in which I grew up, the reading of the great Chinese thinkers, and the last not least, the work of the one historian to whom I have ever been devoted in confidence, veneration, and grateful emulation: Jakob Burckhardt.<sup>2</sup>

Hermann Hesse, also, from his earliest writings, in an implicit and explicit way, to his final tome, *The Glass Bead Game*, grappled with the challenge and significance of Friedrich Nietzsche, Nietzsche being Fritz Tegularius in Hesse's final magnum opus, just as Father Jacobus was a modified Burckhardt. Jacobus was a Roman Catholic monk but deeply grounded in history as a Benedictine as was Burckhardt (although obviously not a Benedictine monk). Nietzsche tends to be much more in the ascendant these days, whereas Hesse and Burckhardt have waned somewhat, but literal fashion shows come and go as do intellectual fashion shows. Hesse spent much of his life threading the needle between Burckhardt and Nietzsche and this essay will examine how he did this and, in the process, welcoming once again, Hesse and Burckhardt onto the stage of the broader public dialogue of the political and public good and how to think and live it in an age dominated by polarized ideologies, fragmented liberalisms and rising reactionary nationalisms.

It should be noted, at the outset, that Burckhardt (1818-1897), Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Hesse (1877-1962) were each and all suspicious of the emerging and aggressive political nationalism of Otto Von Bismarck (1815-1898) and Germany in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The notion that a unified nationalism emanating from Berlin would shape and guide the future of

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1 Hermann Hesse, *If the War Goes On: Reflections on War and Politics* (London: Pan Books, 1971).

2 Hesse, *If the War Goes On*.

Europe was an anathema of sorts to Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse. This is why, in many ways, Burckhardt spent most of his mature days in Basel and, in time, Nietzsche (who was German, parted paths with Bismarckian German nationalism and taught in Basel with Burckhardt for almost a decade) and Hesse (being also German and Swiss) made Switzerland their home rather than Germany. The more decentralized and canton approach to politics in Switzerland, needless to say, ran counter to the centralized approach of Bismarck and the consolidated nationalism of Germany, statist herdism being at decided odds with such classical humanist thinkers. But there is much more to ponder about why Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse challenged the drift and direction of European intellectual, cultural, spiritual, educational, economic, aesthetic, and political history than merely the worrisome impact of Bismarck; their concerns grounded, rather, in the problematic protean notion of the self, culture and principles at the core of liberalism.

The highly secularized French revolution, rise of science, the significance of rationalism as a way being, secularism as an emerging ideology, and a questioning of religion (in this case Christianity) were part and parcel of the emerging progressive liberalism of the time, Hegel being the prominent philosopher of dialectical progressivism. Who was questioning such an emergent liberal orthodoxy (which we call the modern project or modernity)? And, for those who deconstructed such a project, whose version and turn to history would be used as a diagnosis and prognosis? Burckhardt has often been misread and misunderstood but he was certainly on front stage in raising some pertinent questions, his older and deeper historic sense ever suspicious of “terrible simplifiers” of complex historic ideas and politics.

Burckhardt was a virtual contemporary of Bismarck, and Nietzsche was younger than Burckhardt (even though he imbibed significant aspects of the Burckhardtian distinction between three sources of authority: state, religion, and culture (the latter being favoured and trumping the other two)). Hesse grappled with the state, religion/spirituality, and culture tensions in a way that Burckhardt did not, and Nietzsche often excessively reacted against, pitting these three spheres of human experience against one another, culture often becoming, as with Matthew Arnold, the new religion. But let us first discuss Burckhardt, ponder the Burckhardt-Nietzsche pro-contra, then Nietzsche-Hesse, and conclude with Burckhardt-Hesse.

There are two fine PhD-turned-books on Burckhardt more than worth the reading as primers on Burckhardt and one book on Burckhardt of much fullness and significance: *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity*,<sup>3</sup> Basel

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3 John Roderick Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

in *the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas*,<sup>4</sup> and *Jacob Burckhardt's Social and Political Thought*.<sup>5</sup> It is, of course, best to actually read Burckhardt, but helicopter tours over the forest can offer often a much needed overview of a perspective by an important cultural thinker. There are, perhaps, five points to note in Burckhardt's thinking that made him a significant cultural historian. First, Burckhardt held high, as a civilizational and cultural model, the immense productive and creative output of classical Athens (more on this later) and Renaissance Italy. Second, he thought, with the coming to be of the modern notions of liberty and equality, a dimming and dumbing down of the deeper meaning and significance of creative individualism (that demanded of the creator effort and struggle) had been lost and sacrificed. Third, he thought that the collective violence of the French Revolution, that turned against the past and in a rational, calculating, utopian, and violent manner naively assumed human willing could and would make history in a positive way, a worrisome feature of modernity: past versus future, wisdom versus making, hierarchy of virtues and creativity versus equality of potential and output. Needless to say, the actions by the state in the French Revolution made him suspicious of an uncritical attitude towards the state. Fourth, Burckhardt's turning of the back, for the most part, on Christianity and an idealizing of Classical Athens-Renaissance Italy made for an either-or approach to western civilization. I should note, though, that Burckhardt's more reflective and contemplative read of western cultural history (and history reading us) made him, in many ways, sensitive to significant aspects of western and Christian history (although, by day's end, this was not his north star)—the conservative humanism of Burckhardt makes him a significant guide for many. But Burckhardt's *The Age of Constantine the Great*<sup>6</sup> does give the nod to the ascetic and heroic tendencies of the early Christian monks (agon and hierarchy being the reasons) as does Hesse in his "Three Lives" in *The Glass Bead Game*<sup>7</sup> (but for different reasons). Fifth, Burckhardt thought that with the coming of Socrates (and his excessively rationalist, logical and dialectical ways), the classical tragic Athenian way of "agon" (and the vital and creative struggle which is part of it) had lost its way by reducing culture and thought to logical arguments (rather than a vitalistic and creative aestheticism)—we can see the Apollonian and Dionysian

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4 Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

5 Richard Franklin Sigurdson, *Jacob Burckhardt's Social and Political Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

6 Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Zeit Constantins des Großen* (Basel: Schweighauser'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1853); English translation: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (1949; Milton: Routledge, 2018).

7 Hermann Hesse, *Das Glasperlenspiel: Versuch einer Lebensbeschreibung des Magister Ludi Josef Knecht samt Knechts hinterlassenen Schriften* (Zürich: Fretz & Wasmuth, 1943); English translation: Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (United States: Stellar Classics, 2013).

either-or contrast at work in this analysis of the tensions in classical Athens (whose version should be heeded and why?).

So, in sum, there are five building blocks to Burckhardt's vision of thought, arts, culture and civilization: 1) a certain read of classical Athenian and Renaissance Italy was pitted against modern liberalism and Christianity (Christianity being seen as a forerunner of modern democracy and liberalism), 2) liberal modernity (a sort of secularized Christianity) embodied the decline of the west into the "last man", 3) the French Revolution illuminated for Burckhardt where willing-power and the state, turning against the moderating wisdom of history, could lead to sheer violence under the guise of bringing into being a new utopian order, such as the powerful leader (Napoleon) who incarnated the *ubermensch* and *Gewaltmenschen*, was an anathema to Burckhardt, 4) Burckhardt's more reflective, temperate and contemplative approach to history (even though he had his priorities about which periods of history he preferred) made him somewhat respectful about the role of Christianity within Western cultural history, and 5) Socrates was seen as a problematic and unfortunate representative of the more complex Athenian way (birthing, in a certain manner, a simplified way of knowing—sheer rationalism—such rationalism and the way it has been admired by the west has led to the simplifying of ways of knowing, including the arts and culture). Let us now turn to Burckhardt and Nietzsche.

There have been four tendencies to be recognized when reflecting on the Burckhardt-Nietzsche relationship and such trajectories must be noted. Nietzsche was much younger than Burckhardt and when he came to teach in Basel in 1869 (where Burckhardt taught and where Nietzsche remained until 1879) Burckhardt was a much-respected scholar, and Nietzsche gave him the admiring nod (as he did the rest of his life, including his final letter before having his breakdown). What, though, are the four schools of thought regarding Burckhardt-Nietzsche; where did both men walk the same path, where part company, and why? First, there are those who see Burckhardt as an early and somewhat insignificant influence on the more significant Nietzsche, hence not worthy of more than a mention in the burgeoning Nietzsche scholarship and industry. Second, there are Burckhardt devotees who think Nietzsche thoroughly distorted, used, abused, and misread Burckhardt's name and reputation to articulate ends that Burckhardt opposed and disclaimed. Third, there are those that argue that Nietzsche was the more creative and energetic thinker who anticipated the future (hence worthy of heeding) whereas Burckhardt was a reactionary conservative not worth the time reading or pondering other than his initial and superficial impact. Then, fourth, there are those (and such is the position I will take) that there were and remained many Burckhardtian insights that Nietzsche internalized, but there were, also,

crossroads in the paths where they went in different directions. Such will be the next phase of this unfolding essay.

Where do Burckhardt and Nietzsche walk the same trail, where part paths, and what difference does it make? First, Burckhardt and Nietzsche both argued that the modern liberal ethos led to a flattening out of human creativity, a reducing of human longing to the mediocre, a fragmenting of culture, and a dimming of deeper human desire. Both men saw the reformation and enlightenment project, with their progressive and optimistic notion of human nature, as naïve and a pandering to mass consumption. Needless to say, this made them, at one level, seemingly conservative reactionaries against the modern liberal notion of the superficial self. Interestingly enough, both held high the place of the creative individual, classical Athens and renaissance Italy their models, and the intense creativity of such moments in history soared beyond the pale creativity of their age and ethos. Second, both men took the position that classical Athens, at its best, was not about a culture bringing into being the harmonious and good life through analytical reason. In fact, classical Athens embodied, in thought and deed, an understanding of the deeper tragic nature of reality, how to both live and create with such a perception, and suspicious of reason as means to answer life's troubling questions. Both men thought Socrates birthed such a problematic way of being and, sadly so, gave the west a questionable silver bullet to solve the social and political journey of the all too human journey. In short, both men were suspicious and cynical about reason delivering the goods in any sort of meaningful or comprehensive manner. Third, there was a tendency by both men in what might be called their trichotomy to elevate culture above what might be interpreted as the more oppressive aspects of the state and religion. This means that the realm of the social principle and culture were seen as that which lifted life to a higher level than the more moderate and constrictive aspects of the political principle (state) and religious principle (church). Both men did realize, though, that it was, often, the state (political principle) and religion (church) that supported some of the most significant works of creative culture in western civilization, so when interpreting Burckhardt and Nietzsche it is important not to push the trichotomy in a direction that only collides and is in conflict. Fourth, both men, when they thought about and interpreted Christianity, tended to lean towards the more classical, Catholic, and pre-reformation forms of Christianity. This does not mean, though, that Catholic Christianity was where they finally took their leads and cultural cues. Both men were in reaction to their protestant upbringings, Burckhardt to his Swiss reformed Calvinism, Nietzsche to his Lutheranism, both traditions overplaying notions of Divine Grace that subverted human creativity, responsibility, and willing a greater good. Fifth, both men were suspicious of the emerging bourgeois and entrepreneurial west, the nouveau riche, a parvenu ethos, and those who had no significant sense of

culture and the arts. And, sixth, both men quaffed from the well of the *übermensch*, hence very much artistic aristocrats even though their understanding of the higher person meant the artistic political leader. The underlying notion of the overcomer, though, was very much predicated on the classical idea of the “agon” or struggle to reach ever higher levels of creativity and excellence. In short, hierarchy, overcoming, and struggle made for a significant trinity. But where do such men part paths and why?

Burckhardt and Nietzsche had a particular commitment to the reading, interpretation and application of history. Those who linger for long with Burckhardt’s *Reflections on History*<sup>8</sup> and compare/contrast it with Nietzsche’s *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*<sup>9</sup> cannot but be taken by master going in one direction and disciple in yet another direction. Both men had substantive questions and significant opposition to the use of history as a form of justifying aggressive nationalism, and a form of approaching history in a detached and seemingly scientific and objective manner—this they could agree upon.

But Burckhardt’s more nuanced, measured, and judicious weighing of the tensions between, for example, the three powers of State, Religion and Culture (and the reciprocal action of the three powers) walks the reader to a different place on the historic terrain than Nietzsche’s more reductionistic and, dare I say, ideological read of history (in which the reading and interpreting of history is “for Life” in the present tense). Burckhardt’s read, yet once again, of “The Great Men of History” is layered and, in its own way, reciprocal, whereas Nietzsche’s great men are leaning more in a similar direction. If both men are committed to the *übermensch*, then the way they defined such a term was, often, at odds with one another. The great men for Nietzsche often, with their *wille zu macht*, have worrisome tendencies towards the *Gewaltmenschen* (or more aggressive and violent means of overcoming and bringing into being a reality of self-making and creating). The fact that Nietzsche had, in various places, not only fawned on Machiavelli but more importantly Machiavelli’s nod to Caesar, Cesare Borgia, and Napoleon, would make Burckhardt wince and shy away from the misuse and misdirection of power that, in places, Nietzsche seems to condone as a way of sweeping away the mediocrity of modern last men.

There can be no doubt that Burckhardt and Nietzsche opposed the disruptive and mercantile mentality that reduced all things to mobile commodities, and both men pondered how such a bourgeois and low cultural ethos could be questioned and overcome. But Burckhardt, ever the classical humanist,

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8 Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999).

9 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980).

thought that through education in the best that had been thought, said, and done, fifth columns and ginger groups could offer an antidote to the toxins of the liberal modern way. Nietzsche was convinced that such a position was simply naïve given the run-a-way train of liberal modernity. Nietzsche thought that with the coming to be of the protestant reformation, enlightenment and secularism, such a delaying technique merely put a brake on the deeper nihilism that underlay the thin foundations of liberalism (with its sheer inability to articulate anything of nobility or of a higher virtue, ethic, and ethos). It would just be a matter of time before the more thoughtful would deconstruct the paper-thin core of liberalism, and social and ethical confusion would occur (all choices being but fragile and untenable webs of meaning, meaning with no grounding or holding power). The reality of nihilism was always at the door awaiting the door and house to finally implode within and without.

There is a definite outworking of a political agenda that flows from the different philosophical and historical approaches of Burckhardt and Nietzsche. Both men were skeptical about liberal modernity in delivering on the goods, but they differed on how they might live within such a historic moment while being nourished by different reads of classical Athens and renaissance Italy. If democracy leads to a form of politics in which mass culture comes to shape and define the state, religion, and culture, how are those to think and live who are committed to overcoming such low level and mediocre pandering to lowest level desires and trendy opinions? What does it mean to be an aristocrat of thought, culture and creative deed? Burckhardt realized, in some ways, the will to power that Nietzsche so justified was, in many ways, part of the modern problem just a different version of it—a more cultural rather than political (nationalism) or religious (religious wars and divisive denominations). The content of such a merging of liberty and power was, obviously, different in politics and religion, but the notion of the dominance of liberty and power was something that all three powers shared. Burckhardt, ever the studious historian, saw only too keenly where this led and would lead in the cultural-political direction if Nietzsche took the throne (as he has for many)—liberty-willing facing into the abyss of nothingness and nihilism and a bringing into being, from chaos, ever different and at odds creative possibilities (many with dark and dangerous out workings, but at their highest and best a new being that faced the tragic and nihilist ways and overcame them).

Nietzsche often quoted and drew from Burckhardt as his model and mentor, but the more Nietzsche turned down an aggressive libertarian direction, the more Burckhardt (the conservative humanist of Basel) parted paths with him. Both men were convinced that history had to be more than antiquarian scholarship and only fit for museums—the best of the past, if rightly read and mined, could correct and redirect the problematic pathway being taken by liberal modernity. But, how many actually saw and understood the dilemma

and its unfolding?—very few! They were like the perennial canaries in the mine shaft, the toxins of their times and implications of such toxins felt and internalized by them. Ideas do have consequences, and some consequences take longer than others to bear their diverse fruit on the tree of such ideology. But by days end Burckhardt and Nietzsche took different paths, Burckhardt being the faithful and loyal teacher in Basel, publishing less and less as he aged, his energy given more and more to public lectures and time spent with students. Nietzsche left Basel and took to Sils Maria in the Engadine Valley in Switzerland where some of his most powerful, challenging and pungent books were written before his early breakdown and death. How did Hermann Hesse find a middle way of sorts between Burckhardt and Nietzsche and why did he finally find more affinities with Burckhardt than Nietzsche?

There can be no doubt that Hesse did more than most in his literary, religious, and philosophical journey to make sense of the challenge of Nietzsche but, by day's end, it was Burckhardt that held him the nearest and dearest. How did Hesse engage Nietzsche and what was it about Burckhardt that finally won the day, remembering, of course, that Burckhardt and Nietzsche both share a significant suspicion of the modern liberal project, but they differ on how they each diagnose the problem and their prognosis in dealing with the illness. But it is to Nietzsche and Hesse we now turn.

There are two poles or extremes from which Nietzsche's life and thinking tend to either polarize or dwell within an uneasy and trying tension. There is Nietzsche the destroyer, the model of deconstruction, the thinker with sword, fist, hammer, and fire in hand that exposes and undresses the no clothes emperor of metaphysics, religion, state, bourgeois society, positivist history and science, education, and economics, and seems to point the way to the cliff's edge of nihilism. It is from such a place that the weak despair, cynicism or skepticism takes hold, and a sort of paralysis occurs (or a retreat to the predictability and security of that which had been deconstructed). There seems, from one read of Nietzsche, the overcomer, to be the creative and strong souled ones who, from inner strength and self-understanding, make themselves as a painter would paint on a blank canvass, a writer on a blank page. Such is one pole of Nietzsche; Nietzsche the courageous nihilist who brings meaning and purpose out of nothing or chaos. The other pole from which to read and interpret Nietzsche is his commitment to the notion of *amor fati* (love of one's fate). There is a sense, when read in a certain way, that the authentic overcomer merely overcomes what he/she has been conditioned to be, but on the far side is the new being, the being yet waiting to be born, the being waiting upon and attentive to the daimon of fate (a sort of classical notion, in a way, of Lutheran grace)—all that is finite, conditioned, enculturated and fallible must be seen for what it is, including nihilism, and on the far side of such deconstruction is the Zarathustra prophet and harbinger of the new being

who abides, heeds, and loves the fate given to such an overcomer. Does then Nietzsche see a Zarathustra as one who also attempts to overcome fate itself (content of fate illusive and allusive) or love the givenness of fate? It is these two poles that Nietzsche often traverses in his thinking and prolific writing, his aphoristic probes and prophetic like pronouncements. How did Hesse, in heeding Nietzsche, heed the tendency towards deconstruction-nihilism on the one hand and *amor fati* on the other hand; Zarathustra being, in many ways, Nietzsche's literary messianic figure?

Some of the earliest published writings of Hesse reflect and embody, in a searching yet somewhat immature manner, the unease the sensitive artist in the world feels and is unsure what to do with: *Romantic Songs*,<sup>10</sup> *An Hour Beyond Midnight*,<sup>11</sup> and a culmination of sorts, *The Posthumous Writings and Poems of Hermann Lauscher* (1901)<sup>12</sup> reflect the mood and ways of the lonely artistic individual misunderstood and unheard in an unfeeling and uncaring world. There is an obvious sense that Hermann Lauscher has many an artistic affinity with both Nietzsche and Goethe's *Werther*; Lauscher the sensitive artist, at perpetual odds with the bourgeois and superficial world that he lives in, the gap between the comfortable, unquestioning, affluent bourgeois and the doubting, inwardly disoriented Lauscher inhabiting two different and, in many ways, external and internal realities. Hesse's early novels and prose did, for the most part, not sell well and such a reality, of course, reinforced within him the notion of being the artistic outsider.

It was, though, with the publication of *Peter Camenzind* (1904)<sup>13</sup> that Hesse began to find his vocational way as a writer and artist. Peter is born into a small alpine village (isolated from the larger world), and his there and back again journey takes him into the larger urban, cultural and educational ethos in which the significance and cultural impact of Nietzsche reigns supreme both in an implicit and explicit way. Peter's journey takes him to the abyss a few times but his lingering time in Italy also exposes him to St. Francis of Assisi and Italian communities that live simply yet meaningfully. Peter could not dismiss them easily as a mindless herd. In fact, it is his participation and life with them that, in many ways, transforms him—Francis, integration with community, and serving of the least of these takes Peter to places he never anticipated—his final reconciliation with his father and return to the alpine vision he grew up in concludes the novel. So, the question becomes, what is the content of the genuine overcomer? Is Zarathustra or Francis the way forward?

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10 Hermann Hesse, *Romantische Lieder* (Dresden and Leipzig: E. Pierson's Verlag, 1899).

11 Hermann Hesse, *Eine Stunde hinter Mitternacht* (Leipzig: Verlegt bei Eugen Diederichs, 1899).

12 Hermann Hesse, *Hinterlassene Schriften Und Gedichte von Hermann Lauscher, herausgegeben von* (Basel: R. Reich Buchhandlung, 1901).

13 Hermann Hesse, *Peter Camenzind* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1904), 22.

Which decision, when standing over the abyss and nothingness should be chosen and why? Such were Hesse's initial probes into the challenge of Nietzsche.

The publication of *Under the Wheel* (1906)<sup>14</sup> brought to the fore the clash between, this time, an authoritarian educational system and the sensitive creative artist; the educational system, like a steam roller, crushing the creative artist under its relentless wheel. Again, Hesse has an affinity with Nietzsche's many barbs against the German educational system of his time in which the true thinker and artist could be crushed by such a tank.

The pendulum swing between nihilism and *amor fati* heats up further and in a more demanding way in *Gertrude* (1910).<sup>15</sup> The two dominant actors in this compelling novel take the tensions much deeper and further than the previous novels. Kuhn is a crippled composer who knows suffering, pain, and inner anguish. It is, of course, somewhat understandable that he projects such erratic and senseless tragedy and unpredictability on nature and life in general—how is it possible to affirm life when much of the evidence negates it? The other leading actor, Muoth, takes the nihilist path to one possible end—there is no meaning other than what we make, why bother making more creative meaning (all is transitory and an illusion), so suicide becomes Muoth's answer. Is this the path Kuhn takes, though? Kuhn, by novel's end, dwells in the trying tension of nihilism leading to suicide; an unresolved, doubting and troubled faith in God and a rare blend of sensing the "divine within", a subtle *unio mystica* that is knit together with *amor fati*. Muoth embodies a direction nihilism can go and Kuhn takes a different direction, Hesse ever probing various ways to answer and massage Nietzsche and Zarathustra.

Needless to say, WWI revealed yet further paths possible to take on the nihilist path. The inevitable questions emerging from war about nationalism, brutality of war, destroying another person for the simple reason they are from another place across a border, human willfulness in mutual destruction, seeming silence from any transcendent reality pressed deep into Hesse's psyche. The fact his marriage was ending must not to be missed. The publication of *Demian* (1919)<sup>16</sup> moves the Nietzschean overcomer to yet a more iconoclastic and sacrilegious position, Demian holding high Cain (killer of Abel) as a model of the strong and free versus the passive and weak Abel. The traditional father figure of God is jettisoned in favour of the complex Mother God Frau Eva. The naïve and maturing Sinclair is tutored into a different way of seeing and being by the more complex and challenging Demian, nihilism flirted with but layered Jungian archetypes merging and mingling in the mind and

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14 Hermann Hesse, *Unterm Rad: Roman* (Berlin: Fischers Bibliothek zeitgenössischer Romane, 1906).

15 Hermann Hesse, *Gertrud: Roman* (München: A. Langen, 1910).

16 Hermann Hesse, *Demian: Die Geschichte von einer Jugend* (Berlin: Fischer, 1919), 9–16.

imaginings of Demian and Sinclair; Jung himself having written much on Nietzsche, and Hesse being a patient of both a Jungian counsellor and Jung himself. There can be no doubt that *Demian* is a novel not to miss in Hesse's ongoing journey with Nietzsche and ways of engaging him. It is significant to note as WWI came to an inevitable end, Hesse published his lengthy and not to be missed *Zarathustra's Return* (1919).<sup>17</sup> *Zarathustra's Return* is Hesse taking up the mantle of Nietzsche and using Nietzsche's Zarathustra metaphor as a way of debunking and opposing the German spirit of aggressive hawkishness in a way that Nietzsche's notion of the *ubermensch* could not be confused or equated with—the herd mentality of German nationalism, in short, was anti-Zarathustrian. Hesse's use of Zarathustra both made it clear that Hesse was indebted to Nietzsche but his interpretation of Nietzsche clearly separated Nietzsche from those (such as Nietzsche's sister) who attempted to use him to prop up and legitimate the right wing of German fascism and Nazism.

There is, of course, Hesse's ongoing interaction with Nietzsche in most of his novels, but it would be remiss to miss his equally significant engagement with Dostoevsky in his two articles, published in 1920 in his book *Glimpse into Chaos*.<sup>18</sup> *Glimpse into Chaos* has two poignant and not to be missed essays on two of Dostoevsky's novels *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot*. The subtitle of the essays is appropriately entitled "The Downfall of Europe". Hesse, like most sensitive thinkers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, realized Europe was quickly losing its ethical, metaphysical, and religious mooring. WWI only revealed the sheer emptiness and vacuity of a core and north star by which Europe might orient and chart its future. The notions of liberty *sans* content and *laissez-faire* identity and ethics meant any sort of meaning could be made by the willing individual. Hesse probed such a worrisome nihilism in the Russian novels mentioned above, and his notion of the emerging "Russian Man" was, in many ways, the stark opposition of the more classical and humanist notion of *Homo sapiens* (a common humanity grounded in a desire to live into wisdom and from such a centered place). Hesse suggested in his two essays on Dostoevsky's novel that the emerging nihilism would produce men and women that opposed any sort of restraint in the name of freedom and liberty and, in the process, would inevitably lead to the downfall of Europe. Hesse even suggests, in these essays, that "it seems to me that European and especially German youth are destined to find their greatest writer in Dostoevsky—not in Goethe, not even in Nietzsche". Needless to say, Hesse focused on that part of Dostoevsky's novels in which the main protagonists had turned against any restrictions, forms and obstacles and asserted their

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17 Hermann Hesse, *Zarathustras Wiederkehr: Ein Wort an die Deutsche Jugend. Von einem Deutschen* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1919).

18 Hermann Hesse, *Blick Ins Chaos: 3 Aufsätze* (Bern: Seldwyla, 1921), 4–6.

wants, wills, and a making and defining of reality in any shape, colour, and size they wished. There is, of course, the deeply religious Dostoevsky who opposed such a drift and direction, but the opposite pole was the Russian Zarathustras. Hesse, in his two essays, probes and bores into the emerging ethical and metaphysical vacuum and malaise in Europe post-WWI in these challenging must-read essays; and, in some ways, *Demian* was his initial literary attempt to face into the challenges of both Nietzsche and Dostoevsky.

There is an obvious turn in Hesse's writing after *Demian* and *Zarathustra's* *Return* to a deeper spirituality in *Siddhartha* (1919-1922).<sup>19</sup> Siddhartha is wary of Gotama the Buddha, and much of his journey is more about learning to live into and from love, the pain and suffering of love, and the redemptive nature of love. Siddhartha, by novel's end, becomes the kindly and wise ferryman who takes pilgrims from the shoreline of what they are leaving behind, across the waters to the shoreline of where they are going. There is an emerging depth in *Siddhartha* that has some affinities with St. Francis and Peter Camenzind. Who then is the real overcomer and *ubermensch*? There is no doubt that Siddhartha goes to places of insight and wisdom that *Demian*, Sinclair, Kuhn and Muoth do not. What does it mean, therefore, to become the new being, and how is Hesse parting with Nietzsche in such a read and approach, the actual content of the overcomer seeming at odds with one another?

The shift from a seemingly deeper, simpler and more integrated notion of the spiritual overcomer in *Siddhartha* gave way to Hesse's more frayed and divided notion of the human soul in *Steppenwolf* (1927).<sup>20</sup> Harry Haller, the main protagonist in the novel, is a divided person, part a wild wolf of the steppes, part drawn to the urban, civilized and cultured world of the city. There can be no doubt Harry despises the petty and bland ethos of the bourgeois last man, the middle-class herd person who neither thinks nor feels deeply. Harry, like previous protagonists, sees much social and human reality as a construct, the language and practice of good and evil being means the weaker use to protect themselves from the demands of the stronger, the more passionate, the more in touch and tune with their inner and deeper *amor fati*. There are many affinities in style and content between *Demian* and *Steppenwolf*, Nietzsche's Zarathustra ever being pondered, worked through and evaluated. Martin Buber, in his fine article on Hesse ("Hermann Hesse's Service to the Spirit") for Hesse's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, in *A Believing Humanism: My Testament 1902-1965* (1967)<sup>21</sup> rightly so, I think, hinted at the dilemma within Hesse's literary struggles. There seemed to be two trajectories Hesse was going in his inter-

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19 Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha: Eine indische Dichtung* (Berlin: Fischer, 1922).

20 Hermann Hesse, *Der Steppenwolf, von Hermann Hesse* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1927).

21 Martin Buber, *A Believing Humanism: My Testament, 1902-1965*, translated, and with an introduction and explanatory comments by Maurice Friedman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).

action with Nietzsche. Hesse could continue the path of the vitalistic, artistic maker of history who, again and again, alone and lonely, isolated yet refusing to conform, misunderstood by nation, state, community, and middle class, standing over the abyss of nihilism, through sheer force of will, overcomes the emptiness within and without, and the skepticism and cynicism of the weaker willed ones. Or, Hesse could ponder yet deeper and further a more significant and substantive notion of meaningful overcoming that was grounded in the demands of community and service to a fuller good. Such, in some ways, was the bent and direction of Hesse's *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930).<sup>22</sup>

There is an obvious sense in *Narcissus and Goldmund* that Goldmund remains, in a variety of ways, the uber artistic individualist who indulges both physical and creative appetites to the fullest measure. Hesse does realize much is lost when the dynamic and engaged aspects of Narcissus are lost within the soul. It is, though, to Narcissus (most interesting how Hesse is redoing and rethinking this classical myth) that Hesse sees as the counterpoint—a probing of a deeper communal spirituality, somewhat indebted to Siddhartha and Peter Camenzind, that Hesse explores in this maturing novel. It is, of course, not an either-or, but more a probing of the pro-contra of both Narcissus and Goldmund, the appeal of the liberty loving Goldmund (and the dangers of such notions of liberty) and the more ordered, disciplined and communal artistic/monastic vision of Narcissus that keep this novel in living tension; Narcissus, in some ways, an anticipation of Father Jacobus in *The Glass Bead Game*. There can be little doubt, though, that the issue of the conditions for authentic freedom is being pondered in this transition novel. I think it can be legitimately argued that Goldmund seems to be the more attractive actor on the stage, but Narcissus is about to emerge as a serious option and contender to Zarathustra.

There is a sense in *The Journey to the East* (1932)<sup>23</sup> that Hesse has made a definitive turn in his understanding of the overcomer. What within and without is meant to be overcome? I have covered, in previous essays, the content and core of *The Journey to the East*,<sup>24</sup> but suffice it to say that Leo in *The Journey to the East* is the regal, royal, mature overcomer who is the head of the spiritual League of those travelling to greater depths (both past and present). Leo is also the hidden (throughout most of the novel) servant of all servants, Leo himself being Francis of Assisi's dearest friend; the metaphor of Leo the lion being one who has disciplined desires for a higher spiritual good (important

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22 Hermann Hesse, *Narziss und Goldmund* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1930).

23 Hermann Hesse, *Die Morgenlandfahrt: e. Erzähl* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1932), 1–5.

24 Ron Dart, *The Journey to the East by Hermann Hesse* (1956; Clarion: Journal of Religion, Peace & Justice, 2012).

Ibid., "Hermann Hesse's 'The Journey to the East' (Part 2)" (Clarion: Journal of Religion, Peace & Justice, 2019).

to recall at this point Zarathustra's three phases of transformation, the lion being the second). Leo is, in many ways, a more mature and deeper version of Narcissus, Siddhartha, and Peter Camenzind. So, the deeper and more perennial question becomes this: whose version and vision of the overcomer is the most convincing and why? Hesse was very much moving in the direction of the classical humanist, while Nietzsche was veering off in another direction. There is a succinct summary of Leo's position near the end of chapter 1 in *The Journey to the East*, and I quote from it. Leo has been commenting on how the abiding appeal of both mothers and artists is the way they give birth to and serve both children and artistic creation—at times, the mother and artist seem weary and worn low in the doing of the deed and being true to such a fate. And yet, Leo has this to say:

“Perhaps it is sad and yet also beautiful. The law ordains that it shall be so”

“The Law?” I asked curiously, “What law is that, Leo?”

“The law of service. He who wishes to live long must serve, but he who wishes to rule does not live long”.<sup>25</sup>

There is an obvious position being taken by Leo, head of the League, in such a position taken (and the consequences of it). Those who know and are willing to serve their inner vision, spark, fire, fate, produce life and life abundant, but this only occurs through self-understanding and serving-birthing-being a midwife of that which is deepest within and most responsible without. The two German words, *knecht* and *dienst* are essential to understand in Hesse's response to Nietzsche.

Let us now turn to Hesse's final answer and synthesis in his response to Nietzsche in *The Glass Bead Game* (1943).<sup>26</sup> There are five things to note in approaching *The Glass Bead Game*. First, the full-bodied tome is “dedicated to the Journeyers to the East”; hence the earlier book, *The Journey to the East* is a must-read *entrée* and portal to *The Glass Bead Game*. Second, Joseph Knecht is the main protagonist in the book, and it is his life, reflections and journey that are front and centre—he becomes Magister Ludi (and all the complications and crises of conscience this brings him), but the names given him by Hesse are significant. Third, Knecht is both the German word to serve and etymologically it is the cognate of the English word Knight. Hesse is suggesting the real knight, the one who struggles and fights for the good, true, and beautiful is not a well-trained military person but one who struggles to unite the highest cultural visions of the past and present (such is the vocation of the Castilians

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25 Hermann Hesse, *The Journey to the East* (London: Peter Owen; Vision Press, 1933), 39.

26 Hermann Hesse, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, Bd. 1 & 2 (Zürich: Fretz & Wasmuth, 1943).

who play the glass bead game). Third, Joseph is also connected to the Biblical Joseph (who served at the highest levels in the Egyptian court) and, interestingly enough, Thomas Mann's trilogy on the perennial yet Jewish Joseph (published before *The Glass Bead Game*). Fourth, both Burckhardt and Nietzsche factor significantly in *The Glass Bead Game*, although Burckhardt (Father Jacobus) is much more a substantive core and main actor than the more erratic yet brilliant Nietzsche (Fritz Tegularius). Fifth, Hesse brings together, in a symphony of sorts (music and harmony being a foundational metaphor for the Castalians), his final vision in this book, his attempt to synthesize many of the trying tensions that beset those on the road to thinking and living an authentic life, contemplation and action (and an understanding of both) the foundation stones of his cathedral of thought and life, the Castalians—the somewhat inadequate bearers of such cultural guardians.

My essay on *The Glass Bead Game* in *Clarion*<sup>27</sup> should be read as an introductory reflection on this, the final, fullest and ripest vision of Hesse (who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946 for a lifetime of artistic and political activism). I would also encourage you to watch the three videos I did on *The Glass Bead Game* for an oral and visual synopsis of that magisterial tome.<sup>28</sup>

I began this article by suggesting that Burckhardt and Nietzsche were two formative influences on Hesse's life and writings, and yet, at the deepest level, as mentioned in the introductory quote, Burckhardt was the more informative. What was it about Burckhardt that took Hesse to places that Nietzsche was incapable (in his oft reactionary ways) of doing? I will conclude this missive by highlighting five areas in which Hesse had greater affinities with Burckhardt than with Nietzsche.

There can be no doubt that Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse were on the same page in questioning the crass nationalism and crude statism of their age and ethos. They also had little patience for the emerging entrepreneurial culture of the bourgeois philistine class that measured all on the transient scales of profit and loss, the primacy of Culture being one of the first victims of such a dumbing down of that which makes the human quest of perennial significance. But paths do part even though all three men shared, in different ways, substantive doubts about the project of liberal modernity, their aristocratic notions of the primacy of Culture an affront to equalitarian modern thought

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27 *Clarion: Journal of Spirituality and Justice*, "Hermann Hesse: The Glass Bead Game Then & Now—Ron Dart," accessed September 13, 2024, [https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion\\_journal\\_of\\_spirit/2018/04/the-glass-bead-game-then-and-now-ron-dart.html](https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2018/04/the-glass-bead-game-then-and-now-ron-dart.html)

28 *Clarion: Journal of Spirituality and Justice*, "Hermann Hesse's 'Glass Bead Game'—Ron Dart," accessed October 30, 2024, [https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion\\_journal\\_of\\_spirit/2017/04/hermann-hesses-glass-bead-game-ron-dart.html](https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2017/04/hermann-hesses-glass-bead-game-ron-dart.html); [https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion\\_journal\\_of\\_spirit/2017/04/hermann-hesse-the-glass-bead-game-then-now-ron-dart-.html](https://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2017/04/hermann-hesse-the-glass-bead-game-then-now-ron-dart-.html)

and culture. Hesse and Burckhardt do, in their perspectives, trek different trails than Nietzsche, though. There are five differences I will lightly land on. First, Hesse and Burckhardt did their thinking in a more measured and irenical manner, carefully weighing the best that had been thought, said, and done at the high points of the past, absorbing such insights and passing them on through their publications and teaching. Nietzsche tended to be more confrontational, more doing philosophy with a sledgehammer (and, in this sense, very much like Luther). Burckhardt and Hesse were more like physicians of culture, doing their cultural operation with the finesse and nuance of a surgical knife. So, the very method of thinking is quite different—the one irenical the other confrontational. Second, Burckhardt and Hesse had a greater sensitivity to the layered and complex role of spirituality and religion than Nietzsche (who tended, once again, to fire hose Christianity even though he could be more sensitive to the Roman Catholic than the Protestant tradition). Hesse was, I might add, much more probing and sensitive to religion and spirituality than Burckhardt (who was interested in religion as a historic phenomenon but kept an academic and personal distance from it in reality). Hesse's ever deeper interest in the contemplative aspects of religion and spirituality are most obvious in such novels as *Siddhartha*, *Narcissus and Goldman*, *The Journey to the East* and *The Glass Bead Game*. Third, the fact that Hesse had a much greater interest in spirituality and religion means Burckhardt's trilogy of *State, Religion and Culture* (in which *Culture* took the lead) was more complex in Hesse (who thought the dialogue and interaction between *Culture* and *Religion* was more significant than Burckhardt and Nietzsche were willing to grant).

Fourth, Burckhardt and Hesse did, in many ways, embody in their commitment to place (Burckhardt in Basel, Hesse in Montagnola) the notion that the local and small is beautiful, and politics—the best and finest way to live their public lives, with Switzerland (and its many cantons) embodying just such a political way of being. Fifth, Hesse was less enamoured by classical Athens and Renaissance Italy than Burckhardt and Nietzsche. The noble and great men within aspects of these moments of cultural renewal held Hesse less. Hesse had a greater and grander sense of both comparative literature and civilizations, but more important yet, his notion of greatness was measured by the quiet and often ignored virtue of those who serve and are generous to others: Jesus, western and eastern monks and holy people, Francis of Assisi, Peter Camenzind, Narcissus, Leo, and Joseph Knecht are models that Hesse turns to as the north star; the German words of *knecht* and *dienst* portal into Hesse's vision in a way that is foreign to Burckhardt and Nietzsche's notion of the makers and shapers of history. I might add, though, that Burckhardt did give the nod to the ascetics in the early church that does need to be recognized, but many of his great men of history are quite different as cultural ikons—Hesse does nudge Burckhardt further in the direction he had some affinities with.

It is, obviously, time to thread this essay to a close. In sum, Hesse was substantially impacted by Burckhardt and Nietzsche, but it was Burckhardt that did more than Nietzsche in shaping his thinking and life. This did not mean, though, that Hesse swallowed Burckhardt whole. There are many significant ways in which Hesse took a different bend in the trail than Burckhardt (and such a different trail taken led him to unique sights and landscapes), and it is to such places seen and lived within that Hesse's unique vision and attractive qualities make him of perennial interest. It is, though, Hesse's blending of a grander religious synthesis, shaped and defined by service (*knecht-dienst*) within an inner self understanding of *amor fati* and the *unio mystica* that takes him to places Burckhardt and Nietzsche do not go. And, Burckhardt, Nietzsche, and Hesse bring to us, given their mining of the western direction (and the challenge to it these days), this simple question and answer: whose version of the western (and eastern) tradition should we heed, hear, and why? Hesse, it seems to me, offers the better and fuller, more nuanced and insightful, the deeper humanist and classical approach that transcends time and place, yet is perennially applicable to both.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Ron Dart taught in the department of Political Science (POLSC), Philosophy (PHIL), and Religious Studies (RELST) at the University of the Fraser Valley (Abbotsford, British Columbia) for almost 35 years. During the 1980s, he was on staff with Amnesty International and worked with the organization for about 15 years. Dart has published more than 40 books, focusing on Canadian High-Red Toryism, Canadian political philosophers Stephen Leacock, George Grant, and European writers such as Hermann Hesse, Jacob Burckhardt, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Currently, he teaches graduate courses at St. Stephen's University in New Brunswick and has been invited to return as professor emeritus to teach a few courses on Western political philosophy at the University of the Fraser Valley for the Winter 2025 semester.*

## Philanthropy According to Saint Gregory Palamas<sup>1</sup>

### FOREWORD

by Julianna Giannoutsou PhD

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Founder & Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Philanthropy  
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As I embarked on a journey to explore the work of St. Gregory Palamas, I recalled my trip to the 2009 ARNOVA conference. At that time, I was a Philanthropic Studies Doctoral student at IUPUI, serving as the Managing Editor of *NVSQ*. I travelled to Cleveland with my colleagues and fellow students. During a mini-bus ride, I had a conversation with Professor Dwight Burlingame, then co-Editor-in-Chief of *NVSQ*, about the meaning of philanthropy. We discussed the various ways one can be philanthropic, and as a non-native English speaker who often paid attention to word formation, I shared an observation: I found it interesting that the root of the word *forgiveness* is *give*.

To my surprise, Professor Burlingame responded without hesitation, as if he had already reflected on the topic. He said, “Yes, because forgiveness is generosity of the heart.” That response stayed with me for years. The idea that forgiveness is a form of philanthropy had not occurred to me before. After our conversation, this new understanding sparked a question in my mind: why hadn’t any of the philanthropic studies research articles I was reading explored this expression of philanthropy? Moreover, I began to wonder what other forms of philanthropy might be missing from the research agenda. “Is there a missed opportunity to inspire human potential for love and goodness in the world?” I thought to myself.

I am deeply grateful to Professor Miltiadis Vantsos for illuminating the work of the 14th-century Orthodox Christian saint, Gregory Palamas, who

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1 This article appears in *Philanthropia* with a permission from the School of Social Theology and Christian Culture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki where the original version of the article in Greek language was published in 2013 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of *Cosmos*, the scientific e-Journal on Orthodox Theology & Christian Culture.

argued that philanthropy is for everyone and highlighted the multitude of ways it can be expressed. I am also thankful for the opportunity to launch *Philanthropia* with Drs. Marty Sulek and Andrew L. Williams, supported by LCC International University—a journal that will provide a platform for exploring philanthropy through the lens of the humanities and normative theory. It is a happy coincidence (or, as some might say, *providence*) that all three of us graduated from the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and found ourselves at a university in Klaipeda, Lithuania.

## ABSTRACT

*Saint Gregory Palamas emphasizes the central role of philanthropy in spiritual life and fostering harmonious social coexistence. He teaches that God reveals Himself as both good and philanthropic, calling every person to imitate His philanthropy. This imitation extends beyond financial generosity, focusing instead on a loving attitude toward others. Philanthropy, according to Palamas, is accessible to all, as it can be practiced in various forms—whether by offering material support, forgiving wrongs, or providing guidance and comfort. Moreover, each person is capable of discerning the needs of others. Lastly, philanthropy is presented as spiritually beneficial, compensating for a lack of virtues in the philanthropist, as long as it is carried out sincerely and without seeking praise, motivated solely by unselfish love.*

## INTRODUCTION

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, lived in the 14th century and is considered the most important Father of the Church during the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire. Although most of his work has a doctrinal content, St. Gregory was not only a charismatic theologian, distinguished by the precision of his formulations, but also an exceptional clergyman (or shepherd) who took special care of the moral and spiritual life of the faithful.

In his sermons, where he addresses almost all topics concerning Christian ethics, he emphasises philanthropy and its synonyms, love (*ἀγάπη*), mercy (*ἔλεος*), beneficence (*εὐεργεσία*), and benevolence (*ἀγαθοποιεῖν*),<sup>2</sup> to indicate that the relationship with God and the spiritual life necessarily include a loving attitude towards one's fellow human beings, especially those in need. Philanthropy has always been a very important theme, because in every age and in every society, even the most prosperous, there are always poor, homeless, and sick people who need the help of their fellow human beings.

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2 For the concept of philanthropy and its synonymous terms, see Daniel F. Caner, "Clemency, A Neglected Aspect of Early Christian Philanthropy," *Religions*, 9 (2018): 229; Marty Sulek, "On the Classical Meaning of *Philanthrôpía*," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39 no. 3 (2010): 385-408.

Nevertheless, it is not always accepted without controversy, as ethical aspects of justice, responsibility, and the worthiness of the beneficiaries are often raised. Philanthropy is even rejected on the grounds that the provision of financial assistance legitimizes and perpetuates the superiority of those who provide it over those who receive it.<sup>3</sup>

The present study, however, will not deal with the criticisms of philanthropy and the contemporary reflection on its application, but will limit itself to presenting the way in which Saint Gregory understands the concept of philanthropy,<sup>4</sup> and to highlight the importance he attributes to it for spiritual life and harmonious social coexistence. In my opinion, Saint Gregory's views are clear and practical, they give hope and options to those who want to help and be helped, and because of their timeless character, they can be particularly useful for modern man and society.

### PHILANTHROPY IS A CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD

For Saint Gregory, philanthropy is first and foremost a characteristic trait of God. God reveals Himself to humans as good and philanthropic. Every work of God, every intervention in the history of divine economy, and every commandment is done for the benefit of humans. According to the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, God's philanthropy is twofold: before the Fall, it consists of providing all the resources that allow humans to freely achieve the likeness of God, while after the Fall, it is manifested in patience and the restoration of the possibility of deification for humans<sup>5</sup>.

More specifically, God first creates the world and the angels for the sake of humans and then forms humans "in His image and likeness". With much

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3 Gianis Varoufakis, *Against Philanthropy* (Athens, Artemis Publishing, 2009), 71–76. The author expresses his opposition to philanthropy, as he characteristically states (p. 75), "... philanthropy not only constitutes the organized expression of a modern misanthropy but, above all, because it is the greatest enemy of solidarity".

4 For a broader understanding of Christian philanthropy from an orthodox point of view, see Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New York: New Rochelle, 1991); Vasileios Kalliakmanis, "Volunteerism and Social Responsibility" (Thessaloniki: 2002); Georgios Mantzaridis, "Sociology of Christianity" (Thessaloniki: 2004), 331–354; Miltiadis Vantsos and Marina Kiroudi, "An Orthodox View of Philanthropy and Church Diaconia," *Christian Bioethics* 13, no. 3 (2007): 251–268.

5 "Ελέους μὲν οὖν ἅπαντα τὰ πρὸς ἡμᾶς παρ' αὐτοῦ γεγονότα· τί γὰρ ἕτερον τὸ κινήσαν πρὸς τοσαύτας καὶ τηλικαύτας εὐεργεσίας ἢ φιλανθρωπία καὶ ἀγάπη καὶ ἔλεος; Ἀλλὰ διπλοῦν ἐμφαίνεται τοῦτο τὸ ἔλεος· πρὸ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ἁμαρτεῖν ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸν, ἐλεῶν ἀνεπλήρου διὰ πλείστων εὐεργεσιῶν τὴν τῆς φύσεως ἔλλειψιν· μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἁμαρτεῖν ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸν, ἐλεῶν διέμενε μακροθυμῶν, καὶ οὐ τοῦτο μόνον, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ πολλῆς συμπαθείας καὶ τὰς δωρεὰς αὐξῶν ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς ἐπίδοσιν ἄγων, μὴ μόνον οὐκ ἀποδιδούς κακὰ ἀντὶ κακῶν, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὰ παρέχων ἀντὶ κακῶν, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν καλῶν κάλλιστα, καὶ ὧν οὐδὲν ἦ μείζων ἢ κάλλιον". St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 36*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 151, 452AB, ed. J.-P. Migne and Ioānñs K. Diōtēs (Athens: Kentron Paterikōn Ekdoseōn, 1987).

lyricism and vividness, Saint Gregory describes the beauty of creation and the functionality of its individual elements in a way that serves the material and aesthetic needs of humans.<sup>6</sup> However, because humans encapsulate both the sensible and the intelligible world, God foresaw enriching human nature with conscience to help cultivate virtue. Thanks to divine wisdom and philanthropy, a prudent person does not need a teacher to understand the good, as they possess an innate moral law that guides them towards it.<sup>7</sup>

Human refusal to follow the path of likeness to God does not repel divine philanthropy, as God has shown and continues to show patience for human sin. Thus, He did not abandon His creation but sent fathers and prophets to guide them, provided a written law to aid the innate law, and revealed His will through numerous miraculous events. However, such is the magnitude of divine philanthropy, notes Saint Gregory, that God did not stop at these gifts but sent His Son, who emptied Himself of the riches of His divinity and took on human nature to teach humans His will and save them through His death and resurrection.

The incomprehensible philanthropy of God for humans is praised by Saint Gregory in almost every homily, whether for Christmas, Baptism of Christ, the Annunciation of the Theotokos, the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Ascension, Pentecost, or any other feast and worship gathering. His purpose is not only for humans to realize the multitude of divine benefits and respond with gratitude but also to become philanthropic themselves, imitating God's philanthropy. Humans are called to be merciful, just as God the Father is merciful.<sup>8</sup>

## PHILANTHROPY IS THE DUTY OF EVERY PERSON

Imitating divine philanthropy may seem difficult, if not impossible. How can a person imitate a characteristic of God? Furthermore, philanthropy is often perceived as not pertaining to every person, as it seems that only the wealthy, who have the financial means to help the poor and needy, have the duty of philanthropy. Saint Gregory refutes this notion by emphasizing that, first, all people are called to philanthropy; second, that philanthropy should be directed toward every person; and third, that it is an easily achievable duty. After presenting these views of the saint, we will conclude the discussion with a brief reference to an essential prerequisite under which philanthropy constitutes a God-pleasing act.

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6 Ibid., *Patrologia Graeca* 151:449CD; St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 3*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151:33CD.

7 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 3*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151:36B.

8 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 44, 8*, in *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), vol. 79, *Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά Απαντα τα Ἔργα*, vol. 11 (Thessaloniki: 1986), 57-59.

Saint Gregory initially emphasizes that all people are called to philanthropy, as it is not so much about financial means as it is about love for one's neighbor and the willingness to offer help. There are many ways one can assist: by providing food, shelter, medicine, and other material goods; by showing forbearance, patience, and sympathy towards those who have harmed or wronged us; by giving appropriate advice that encourages virtue or deters from sin; and by offering comforting words that strengthen faith, bolster hope, and relieve those who are sorrowful.<sup>9</sup> And if someone does not have surplus goods, he observes, through voluntary fasting and self-restraint, one can secure food for their hungry neighbor.<sup>10</sup> If one is not good with words to give advice and console, they can show patience and teach those around them through their example. By keeping God's commandments and cultivating virtues, one benefits all those with whom they interact, as they become a teacher of virtue through their actions. Thus, every person has the capacity to offer valuable assistance to their neighbor, which is why God expects works of philanthropy from everyone.

Saint Gregory supports this teaching with the Gospel passage of the Last Judgment,<sup>11</sup> in which, according to the Holy Gospel, all nations will be gathered before the throne of God, and the Son of Man will separate the righteous from the unrighteous based on their deeds towards their fellow humans. The righteous will inherit the kingdom of heaven because they kept God's commandments and demonstrated acts of love towards their neighbors, which are specifically mentioned: "For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me".<sup>12</sup>

Christ does not merely encourage specific acts of charity with this phrase, but reveals that acts toward a needy neighbor are as if they are done to Him. Therefore, Saint Gregory emphasizes that a person can make Christ Himself a debtor with a little food, a little water, and some clothing. He also interprets the beatitude of the merciful in the Sermon on the Mount in the same way.<sup>13</sup>

In the same passage, those on Christ's left are condemned because they were merciless and heartless toward people in need. Saint Gregory explains that they are punished because lack of compassion towards a person who has

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9 St. Gregory of Palamas, Homily 13, *PG* 151, 161CD.

10 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily VIII, *PG* 151, 96CD.

11 «ὡς γὰρ ἡ ἀγάπη, ἀδελφοί, καὶ τὰ τῆς ἀγάπης ἔργα πλήρωμα τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐστὶ, οὕτω τὸ μῖσος καὶ τὰ τοῦ μίσους ἔργα, ὁ ἀσυμπαθὴς τρόπος, ἡ ἀμετάδοτος γνώμη, πλήρωμα ἐστὶ τῆς ἀμαρτίας· καὶ καθάπερ τῇ φιλανθρωπῳίᾳ ἔπονται καὶ σύνεισιν αἱ ἀρεταὶ, οὕτω τῇ μισανθρωπῳίᾳ αἱ κακίαι· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀπὸ ταύτης μόνῃς καταδικάζονται». St. Gregory Palamas, Homily IV, *PG* 151, 60D.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., *PG* 151, 57D.

nothing to eat or drink is not just a sin, but “the fullness of sin”. He characteristically writes: “For as love, brethren, and the works of love are the fullness of the virtues, so hatred, the works of hatred, the unfriendly conduct, and the unshared opinion are the fullness of sin; and as philanthropy is followed by the virtues, so is misanthropy followed by the vices; for this reason alone they are condemned”.<sup>14</sup>

While man is called to love his neighbor “as himself,” the merciless person loves money more than his fellow human. Thus, the refusal of charity is characterized by the Archbishop of Thessaloniki as “misanthropy”.<sup>15</sup> He wonders, what is a worse sign of hatred than loving money, which is surplus, more than a brother? Therefore, the merciless and uncharitable who hoard their treasures may seem powerful in the eyes of people, but in reality, they are “worthy of mourning”<sup>16</sup> because they fail to resemble God, who is merciful and philanthropic. To these, Christ will justly say, “I do not know you.”

Saint Gregory explains their rejection as follows: “they do not have the image of the heavenly one; they did not become merciful like the Father; they did not share what they possessed with those in need, just as He freely shared His own goods with all; they were not kind to their neighbors, nor did they bring those far away close through good deeds; therefore, due to this dissimilarity, the good one neither knows nor admits such people.”<sup>17</sup>Top of FormBottom of Form

Behind mercilessness lies, according to Saint Gregory, the passion of greed. It is greed that prevents the foolish rich man in the well-known gospel passage from using the abundance of his estates for the benefit of the poor. The greedy rich man continuously enlarges his storehouses to accommodate the large harvest and is revealed to be foolish and “worthy of death”. What condemns him is not injustice, but greed and mercilessness, the fact that he does not show mercy to his fellow humans with the goods he had in abundance.<sup>18</sup>

The same applies to the rich man who refuses to show mercy to poor Lazarus. He is not condemned for acquiring wealth unjustly, but for being merciless and indulgent, because he did not give from his surplus to cover Lazarus’s lack of food.<sup>19</sup> Greed drives away divine grace and becomes a cause of death, first of the soul and then of the body.

As spiritual life is reflected in social life, Saint Gregory observes that social disputes disrupting harmonious social coexistence are due to the fact that “the

14 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily XIII, *PG* 151, 164D - 165A.

15 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 39, *PG* 151, 489CD.

16 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 48, 12, *EIIE*, pp. 151-153. See also St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 13, *PG* 151, 164B.

17 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 38, *PG* 151, 484B.

18 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 27, *PG* 151, 318AB.

19 St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 45, 6, *EIIE*, pp. 77-79.

fire of greed” characterizes many people and every aspect of social life: “Who does not know the fire of greed burning among us, rising high and reaching almost everywhere, in public taxes, in common markets, in trade?”<sup>20</sup> While greed creates feelings of injustice and leads to conflicts, philanthropy mitigates social inequalities and prevents or restores injustices.

### PHILANTHROPY IS ADDRESSED TO EVERY PERSON

Philanthropy should not only be practiced by every person but, following the example of divine philanthropy, should be directed toward every person. Interpreting the parable of the weeds, Saint Gregory notes that God does not allow the uprooting of the weeds, which the enemy secretly sowed among the wheat, but waits patiently until the time of harvest, when the weeds will be separated from the wheat. God tolerates even the wicked out of philanthropy because, as he explains, many impious and sinful people who live among the righteous learn from their virtue, repent, and themselves transform from weeds into wheat.

The tolerance of evil, therefore, is due to the compassion and forbearance of God, who desires and awaits the repentance of the wicked.<sup>21</sup> And when a person repents and returns, like the prodigal son, God the Father hastens with joy to meet him, to embrace him, and to celebrate the joyous event. From the parable of the weeds, one learns both that a person must love and help every fellow human being, even the wicked, and that the virtuous can offer the greatest assistance to the impious through love and a good example, which is repentance and returning to God.

When a person loves only those who love him and benefits only those who benefit him, he does not receive grace from God,<sup>22</sup> because the good deed is done within a framework of reciprocity and receives its reward immediately.<sup>23</sup> Philanthropy attracts divine grace when it is directed toward individuals from whom no repayment is expected and when it has the character of forgiveness and patience.

The importance of philanthropy towards those who owe or have wronged us is also highlighted by Saint Gregory through the parable of the wicked servant.<sup>24</sup> This servant, who owed ten thousand talents, asked for more time to repay his debt, and the merciful Lord forgave him the entire debt. However, this same servant proved to be harsh and unforgiving towards another servant

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20 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 38, Patrologia Graeca* 151:484B.

21 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 27, Patrologia Graeca* 151:318AB.

22 Luke 6:31–37.

23 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 45, 6, Έλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 77–79.

24 Matthew 18:23–55.

who owed him a hundred denarii. Not only did he not forgive the debt, but he also had him thrown into prison.

When the Lord learned of this, he punished the wicked servant because, although he had been shown mercy, he himself did not wish to show mercy. According to Saint Gregory, Christians face the same danger. They repent for their sins, come to the churches, beseech God, and receive forgiveness. Yet, when they leave the churches and encounter people who owe them or need their help, they often prove to be harsh and merciless. The giver, by contrast, through philanthropy, proves to be worthy of divine mercy, and the debtor, by virtue of God's gratification, becomes a source of many blessings, far surpassing what he received.<sup>25</sup>

### PHILANTHROPY IS AN EASILY ACHIEVABLE DUTY

Philanthropy, according to Saint Gregory, is an easily achievable duty because it is innate and beneficial.<sup>26</sup> As humans are created “in the image and likeness” of God, they are naturally inclined to be favorable toward their fellow humans and have an innate will to do good. Even though this will is influenced and altered by sin, humans still inherently know what is good. For this reason, Christ included all good deeds toward one's neighbor in one brief commandment: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them”.<sup>27</sup> This brief commandment not only prevents a person from committing evil but also calls them to benefit their neighbor in a way they would wish to be benefited by them.

To demonstrate that philanthropy is easily accomplished, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, urges individuals to recall the expectations they have when seeking help from their neighbor. Since they evidently consider it just, right, and easy for the other person to provide the help they seek, they criticize anyone who refuses to help them. When someone makes a mistake, they expect forgiveness and not condemnation from their fellow human, because they obviously consider it just, right, and easy for the other person to show patience toward them. Therefore, what one reasonably expects from their neighbor, they are also obligated to offer to them.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, besides being innate and easy, philanthropy is advantageous for a person since, through it, they can make up for the lack of certain virtues. Saint Gregory explains this view as follows: A person satisfies their material needs by exchanging the products they produce with those produced by others using money. However, something similar cannot happen in spiritual life, as it

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25 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 36, Patrologia Graeca* 151, 456D–457AB.

26 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 45, 3, Έλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 73.

27 Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31.

28 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 45, 3–5, Έλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 73–

is not possible for a prudent person to give a bit of prudence to a just person and receive from them the corresponding justice which they lack.

What does not fall under transactions and equal exchanges becomes achievable through God's philanthropy. By covering their neighbor's lack of shelter, clothing, and food, a person compensates for their own lack of virtues.<sup>29</sup> Saint Gregory marvels at the greatness of divine philanthropy, which allows a person to exchange cheap material things for virtues. To further emphasize how advantageous philanthropy is for a person, he asks rhetorically: If someone gave gold and asked for bronze in return, who would not consider such an exchange beneficial? However, by offering help to their neighbor, he continues, one does not exchange similar metals but gives human goods to receive divine gifts from God.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We conclude the presentation of Saint Gregory Palamas's views on philanthropy with an important observation. Philanthropy is praised by the saint as a "sign and fruit of love" (δειγμα και καρπὸν οὖσαν τῆς ἀγάπης).<sup>31</sup> As an expression and fruit of love, philanthropy is the culmination of all virtues. The philanthropists on Christ's right hand at the future judgment were righteous and are characterized as "sheep," a term that indicates their likeness to the "Lamb of God".<sup>32</sup>

However, when philanthropy is not performed out of sincere love for one's neighbor but from selfish motives, such as the desire for self-justification and the praise of others, it loses its value. A characteristic example is the Pharisee praying in the temple, who, although he gives a tenth of his possessions to the poor, does not leave the temple justified by God because he is arrogant and prideful.<sup>33</sup> The good is not truly good, Saint Gregory points out, when it is not done in a good way: "the evil one, knowing that the good is not good when it is not done in a good way, strives to persuade us not to perform good deeds with a God-pleasing purpose, nor for the praise of God, but for the praise of men, so that in this way, he deprives us of the reward from God and heavenly rewards."<sup>34</sup>

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29 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 48*, 1–4, *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 136–140.

30 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 46*, 10, *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 103.

31 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 4*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151:56C.

32 *Ibid.*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151:53C.

33 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 2*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151:25AB.

34 St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 6*, *Patrologia Graeca* 151, 77B. Cf. St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily 51*, 9, *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας* (ΕΠΕ), 224.

## Artificial Intelligence and Philanthropy: The Cybernetics of Philanthropy from 1974 to 2024

### ABSTRACT

*OpenAI, creator of ChatGPT, was founded as a nonprofit with a mission of ensuring that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity. AI, therefore, was intended to advance the common good, sharing an underlying principle with philanthropy and the nonprofit organizations it supports. However, this was not the first association of machine learning with philanthropy, particularly in terms of algorithms designed for control versus those aimed at doing good. In 1974, a white paper by Heinz Von Foerster, a polymath scientist who happened to be president of an important foundation, considered the potential of computer-based feedback systems to improve “giving with a purpose.” A review of his paper served as the impetus for this essay, which explores the antecedents of contemporary predictions regarding the potential of AI to enhance the practice of philanthropy.*

### INTRODUCTION

ChatGPT seized the public imagination soon after it was released in November 2022, introducing the prospect that artificial intelligence (AI) had become a reality in everyday life, available to everyone with internet access. Predictions of its possibilities were boundless, including fears about what it could do if not controlled. OpenAI, creator of ChatGPT, was founded as a nonprofit in 2015 although it subsequently formed a for-profit subsidiary in 2019. The guiding charter of the controlling nonprofit was announced in 2018: “OpenAI’s mission is to ensure that artificial general intelligence (AGI)—by which we mean highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work—benefits all of humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

AI, then, was to advance the common good, sharing an underlying principle with philanthropy and the nonprofit organizations philanthropy supports. In 2023, Google AI for Social Good made a similar claim, “We believe that AI is a foundational and transformational technology that will provide compelling and helpful benefits to people and society through its capacity to assist, complement, empower, and inspire people in almost every field of human en-

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1 OpenAI, “OpenAI Charter,” 2024, <https://openai.com/charter>.

deavor”.<sup>2</sup> Other champions of AI have made similar commitments to do good through its responsible use.

Exciting as the current conception of AI may be, it is not the first computer concept to make a connection between machine learning and philanthropy, between algorithms of control and doing good. In 1974, a white paper by Heinz Von Foerster, a polymath scientist who happened to be the president of an important foundation, considered the potential of computer-based feedback systems to improve “giving with a purpose”.<sup>3</sup> A review of his paper was the impetus for this essay, which explores the antecedents of contemporary predictions of the potential of AI to enhance the practice of philanthropy.

## AI'S IMMEDIATE APPEAL TO NONPROFITS AND CONCERN TO GRANTMAKERS

Despite being on the scene only two years, there are already multiple tools designed specifically for fundraising, grantmaking, and nonprofit management—and many more are in development. Scholars at the Dorothy A. Johnson Center, for example, have been tracking AI for several years, noting in a 2024 analysis, predicting a new level of accessibility and opportunity: “With cost no longer the primary barrier to entry, nonprofits and foundations who invest the necessary time and capacity into exploring these new tools and commit to using them responsibly will benefit the most from this emerging technology”.<sup>4</sup>

Academics, practitioners, and vendors alike are asking just what the benefits of these new tools might be—especially when potential and as yet unknown implications are considered. Might there be a diminishment of heretofore prized interaction of human beings with and within philanthropic organizations resulting in a loss of trust, reciprocity, gratitude, or social capital? Wherein do efficiencies lie and at what costs? Will human goals and values be superseded by algorithms generated by machines? Each new question generates another. Fundamental questions related to using new and as yet undeveloped AI tools are being explored across the sector based more on speculation than facts, case studies, or longitudinal assessments. The philosophical question of whether AI can even be designed to include moral agency is unknown, and it may not be desirable even if possible, as ethicist Joanna Bryson argues, concluding “that while constructing AI systems as either moral agents or patients is possible, neither is desirable. In particular, I argue that we are unlikely to

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2 James Manyika, Jeff Dean, Demis Hassabis, Marian Croak, and Sundar Pichai, “Why We Focus on AI,” *Google AI*, January 16, 2023, <https://ai.google/why-ai/>.

3 Heinz von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose: The Cybernetics of Philanthropy,” *Occasional Paper 5* (Washington DC: Center for a Voluntary Society, 1974).

4 Kallie Bauer, “The Artificial Intelligence Revolution Arrives in Philanthropy,” 2024, <https://johnsoncenter.org/blog/11-trends-in-philanthropy-for-2024/>.

construct a coherent ethics in which it is ethical to afford AI moral subjectivity”.<sup>5</sup> So many such analyses are occurring so quickly in so many venues that meaningful conclusions are at best guesses—but the answers will have enormous consequences. A sampling of the early inquiries and speculations are noted throughout this essay, and it is important to emphasize that at this stage nothing is yet certain.

As one philanthropy company, Good360,<sup>6</sup> has noted, “There’s a technological transformation happening right now that some say will be on par with the arrival of the computer age or the advent of the Internet: It’s the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT that ordinary people can use to automate a vast variety of tasks” such as marketing and communications, grant writing, data mining and analysis, predictive analytics, and client interactions. DonorSearch,<sup>7</sup> a research platform, claims to have created “the most advanced machine learning algorithm ever developed for the nonprofit sector.”

However, there are ethical worries, including those specific to philanthropy, despite obvious enthusiasms.<sup>8</sup> As *The Smart Nonprofit* author Beth Kanter and her nonprofit colleagues have warned, there is a difference between AI and earlier computer innovations: “It’s making decisions that only people could make until right now. This includes decisions about who to hire and what stories to tell, and it makes this moment both exciting and terrifying”.<sup>9</sup>

Among philanthropists, especially foundations, there is also caution. In November 2023, ten foundations joined in a \$200 million plus effort to “ensure that AI advances the public interest” aimed to “mitigate AI harms and promote responsible use and innovation”.<sup>10</sup> In part this initiative is because some grantmakers are already using AI to help in decision making. In an informal survey, Foundation Source estimated that as of early 2023 about 26% of grantmakers were using or planning to use AI, with others waiting to see what the implications might be: Foundation Source asked, can AI be used “by foundations to evaluate applications for funding” and then noted that AI could be used by different parties during the development, review and approval of a

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5 Joanna J. Bryson, “Patience Is Not a Virtue: The Design of Intelligent Systems and Systems of Ethics,” *Ethics and Information Technology* 20 (2018): 15–26.

6 Good360, “How Nonprofits Can Use AI to Increase Fundraising and Engagement.” Good360 (blog), June 14, 2023.

7 DonorSearch, “DonorSearch Ai,” 2024, <https://www.donorsearch.net/donorsearch-ai/>.

8 Cherian Koshy, “Artificial Intelligence and Fundraising Ethics: A Research Agenda,” *Fundraising Ethics* (Portsmouth, UK: Rogare: The Fundraising Think Tank, 2024).

9 Beth Kanter, Allison Fine, and Philip Deng, “8 Steps Nonprofits Can Take to Adopt AI Responsibly,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, September 2023, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/8\\_steps\\_nonprofits\\_can\\_take\\_to\\_adopt\\_ai\\_responsibly](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/8_steps_nonprofits_can_take_to_adopt_ai_responsibly).

10 Ford Foundation, “Philanthropies Launch New Initiative to Ensure AI Advances the Public Interest,” 2023, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/news-and-press/news/philanthropies-launch-new-initiative-to-ensure-ai-advances-the-public-interest/>.

single application, begging the question . . . who ultimately is in control? Their basic question was, “Can AI accurately assess the nuances that determine if a grant application is worth funding better than a person can?”<sup>11</sup>

Other foundation initiatives include a Sloan Foundation project that raises questions about whether “results can or should be trusted.” They are interested in “identifying and mitigating algorithmic bias, the role of training and benchmarking datasets in AI development, how Machine Learning techniques enhance or degrade rigor and reproducibility, and the ways that algorithmic recommendation systems influence trust in knowledge”.<sup>12</sup> One of the unknowns about AI in grantmaking is the degree to which it can overcome bias without perpetuating it, become more equitable and inclusive, and engage those whom philanthropy is intended to help in defining and addressing their own needs. Despite the novelty of AI, these concerns have been central to philanthropy for some time—decades even.

The concepts of “participatory grantmaking” and “trust based philanthropy” have found more adherents since their origins in past decades but also critique.<sup>13</sup> There is ongoing concern about a disconnect between organizational recipients and their donors as a result of over-reliance on data driven, “strategic philanthropy” instead of the insights of those impacted.<sup>14</sup> Still, there persists a strong argument that “grantmaking should rely on professional staff to make expert decisions,” as recently stated by Manhattan Institute critics.<sup>15</sup> In a rebuttal, three foundation and nonprofit officials have argued that “What’s missing is the role of the community in defining and shaping the purpose for which grants are made. If a donor actually cares about the success of an organization, their support should be predicated on a common mission for its end purpose, not to enact their personal goals, nor to be personally appreciated”.<sup>16</sup>

Even without taking AI into account, the extraordinary combination of events reshaping the purposes of philanthropy in the past five years has been nothing short of stunning: The impact of the global Covid pandemic, the

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11 Foundation Source, “Philanthropic Giving & Generative AI: Who’s Really In Control?” 2023, <https://foundationsource.com/blog/philanthropic-giving-generative-ai-whos-really-in-control/>.

12 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, “Exploratory Grantmaking in Technology,” 2024, <https://sloan.org/programs/digital-technology/exploratory-grantmaking-in-technology>.

13 Cynthia M. Gibson, Lisa Pilar Cowan, and Jocelyne Rainey, “Philanthropy Needs to Trust the Real Experts—the People It Supports,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, 2024, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/philanthropy-needs-to-trust-the-real-experts/>.

14 J. Bennet, C. Damick, K. Layne, B. Murphy, D. Salas, and K. Swanson. 2021, “Strategic Philanthropy Gets a Wake-up Call,” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, 2021.

15 James Piereson and Naomi Shcaefter Riley, “The Problem With ‘Trust-Based Philanthropy,’” *City Journal* (blog), December 13, 2023, <https://www.city-journal.org/article/just-trust-us/>.

16 Gibson, “Philanthropy Needs to Trust the Real Experts.”

growing public distrust of once esteemed civic organizations, radical income disparity, movements responding to social injustices, politicization and polarization of values, growing authoritarianism, environmental and human disasters, improvised truth, identity politics, and now the full emergence of AI agents with unknown consequences for good and evil. Each of these developments, and others, has had an impact on the purposes and means of philanthropy worldwide, but especially in the United States, with its early global lead in creating and guiding the development of AGI for social benefit as well as commercial and military applications.

What is little known and less appreciated in the current excitement over AI's uncertainties is that this same issue was at the heart of using machine learning to advance the common good when it was first raised fifty years ago. Cybernetics—the science of control and communications—was already exploring these issues in the 1940s and 1950s. The realization that algorithms controlled most of the human interactions with computing was already well-established before ChatGPT became the “peoples’ machine.” The beginning consideration of AI’s potential for philanthropy may have been in 1974, with publication of Von Foerster’s paper, *Giving with a Purpose: The Cybernetics of Philanthropy*.<sup>17</sup>

While not literally an autonomous system designed to outperform human philanthropists, Von Foerster’s proposed concept was intended to address societal issues, problems, and challenges not unlike those of today. His design was intended to give presence to typically excluded points of view and to recognize that there is relevant information beyond what experts might know or acknowledge. Some of the emerging concepts of inclusive philanthropy—generated out of contemporary social awareness—have begun to address Von Foerster’s concerns about “how to give” even without the benefit of AI algorithms and formulae. It is still worth considering how systems thinking of 1974 might inform actions and even guide AI’s application to philanthropy in 2024. Social conditions are similar, but the tools are more powerful, computers are ubiquitous, and information is commodified. After all, there has been considerable organizational learning since the seventies, which itself was a key intention of Von Foerster’s design.

## REINVENTING THE PAST

The 1974 paper was written by Heinz Von Foerster, an Austrian scientist (and relative of Ludwig Wittgenstein), a post-WWII distinguished electrical engineer at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, one of the founders of cybernetics, and at one time the president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation. Von Foerster focused his application of cybernetics on the “interface,” or in-

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17 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”.

termediaries, to which foundations and philanthropists entrust their wealth to achieve their purposes.

Significantly, Von Foerster's paper was written at the insistence of John Dixon, then director of the Center for a Voluntary Society (CVS), which provided funding for the Association of Voluntary Action Scholars (AVAS). Formally established as a 501(c)3 in 1971, the Association changed its name to the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) in 1991. David Horton Smith, the acknowledged founder of AVAS and ARNOVA, was the full-time director of research for CVS from 1971 to 1974, during which time much of his time was devoted to the creation of AVAS—and ARNOVA.<sup>18</sup> It was a highly generative period for research on the voluntary sector broadly and philanthropy in particular, especially given the major social changes underway during the initial Association's first five years—a time when many academic scholars, think tank officials, and government researchers were exploring the best way for philanthropists and governments to address the pressing social needs of the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Von Foerster described how cybernetics offers an effective, efficient, and objective means to achieve *purpose* by offering a rigorous framework for analyzing goals and by allowing the quantification of uncertainty. He argues—based on information theory—uncertainty is necessary if philanthropy is to identify actual root needs and problems in a changing society. The reverse is the ironic pitfall of philanthropists who seek to *reduce uncertainty* as the perceived path to avoiding mistakes and achieving their goals by relying (exclusively or even primarily) on past experiences. By focusing on past successes, in both defining problems and needs as well as the measurement of success, philanthropists forego the possibility of uncertainty, the unknown (including hearing unknown and typically ignored “voices” from society at large). Von Foerster argues that these perspectives and unknown solutions are essential to address new problems and new needs precisely because they *are* new.

## MOVING FORWARD

In our bringing Von Foerster's long-forgotten essay forward, those more interested in how his paper might help address the challenging social, political, and economic conditions of today, instead of cybernetics or AI per se, might wonder why we do not more often cite Von Foerster's own sense of the challenges as they existed in his time. Why was he compelled to propose a new way of thinking about philanthropy? Although clearly aware of social conditions in his role as a leader of the Wenner-Gren Foundation—as well as a university professor during a highly charged period in American history marked

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18 David Horton Smith, “A History of ARNOVA,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2003): 458–72.

by campus protests akin to today—his essay takes for granted that his audience was well-grounded in the experiences of the time. The paper’s sponsor, CVS, was itself founded out of the immediacy of the incendiary times. As a consequence, we touch on some of the events of the time that contextualize “why” Von Foerster felt compelled to offer a way of addressing voluntary action for the common good during a period when it was clearly needed.

One of the most important inferences to draw from both Von Foerster’s model and from contemporary statements articulating giving through participatory grantmaking and trust-based philanthropy is the intent to include more historically excluded perspectives. It appears Mackenzie Scott intended just such a recognition in naming her organization “Yield”—“after a belief in adding value by giving up control”.<sup>19</sup> But how?

There is value in hearing often excluded voices for the sake of plurality in a democratic society. There is also value in a recognition that drawing on past experiences to define social needs (problems) and acceptable (safe) solutions (requests for proposals) does not take into account what is unknown and untried even as building on past knowledge is essential. Although trends toward more inclusive decision making by foundations and philanthropists are apparent in the purposes articulated by adherents of participatory and trust-based philanthropy, there is still a legacy of risk avoidance (by relying on past grantees with records of success) or hesitancy to promote risk-taking among grantees.

A 2015 study of risk-taking among 70 foundation staff found ample reason to consider the personal biases and experiences of individuals making decisions.<sup>20</sup> It noted “there are grounds for debate as to whether foundations should be risk-neutral (and function principally in areas where market failures, information asymmetries, and limited target populations make action by other sectors unlikely) or risk-takers (so as to promote more uncertain and perhaps more innovative steps that business and government will not).” The study ultimately concluded that more academic research and more organizational self-study would be needed to resolve the tension.

A few years later, well before AI became central to philanthropic practices, Julia Stasch, the CEO of the MacArthur Foundation, would reflect the growing thought of many of her counterparts in stating, “taking more risk is an imperative for philanthropy in the current era of sweeping national and global change and declining trust in key institutions, including those that undergird our democracy. Foundations can be far less risk averse than government, which invests public dollars, or the private sector, which must answer to shareholders.

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19 Yield Giving, “Gifts,” 2024, <https://yieldgiving.com/gifts/>.

20 John R. Ettinger and John T. Ettinger, “Understanding Risk Tolerance in Grantmaking.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2015.

In short, philanthropy is best positioned to provide society’s ‘risk capital’.<sup>21</sup> Experiments, innovations, and controlled risk-taking have found their way into organizations while the personal risk tolerances of individual donors, whether through their own family foundations or donor advised funds, remain largely unknown and undoubtedly quite varied. As Stasch stated in her commentary, “a single gift of \$100 million is inherently risky,” and for donors who have smaller gifts to make the risks are proportionately just as inherent.

In 1974, “Giving with a Purpose” had already recognized this deficit in philanthropic giving and proposed a solution for which the right time to implement may have arrived—or at least be noted. Would reconsidering cybernetics in the current context of rapid AI developments help guide AI in philanthropy to better results? Cybernetics would seem to say only if the AI systems provide “feedback,” a “process where the observed outcomes of actions are taken as inputs for further action in ways that support the pursuit, maintenance, or disruption of particular conditions, forming a circular causal relationship”<sup>22</sup>—a definition generated by the collective intelligence of crowd sourcing (and used to make a point about “new” ways of learning). This unattributed understanding has, of course, been more seriously studied and described, especially by early pioneers in developing theories of organizational learning. For example, Argyris and Schön describe single and double loop feedback systems,<sup>23</sup> the latter of which fits especially well with the cybernetic model being considered here. The single loop explains how a failed approach to a problem can be corrected by a different action, whereas the double loop feedback not only suggests a different approach but also reconsidering the original goal, which for a philanthropic organization might also entail changing policies, procedures, or objectives.

It is important to note that “diversity” in Von Foerster’s formulation assumes taking into account different elements, qualities, or values of all kinds—including, but not only, diverse people and organizations. Philanthropists—individuals or foundations—can include new information only if they are self-aware of their own observations and concepts, understand how they may predetermine outcomes, and treat them as the basis for new, recursive observations by asking what may be lost in the way purposes and goals have been framed. AI may hold unprecedented, useful ways to address this conundrum of discovering information we don’t know we don’t know, even as current large language models like ChatGPT create “hallucinations.” Fabricated information is estimated to

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21 Julia M. Stasch, “Taking Risk and Requiring Evidence,” *MacArthur Foundation*, 2017, <https://www.macfound.org/press/perspectives/taking-risk-and-requiring-evidence>.

22 Wikipedia, “Cybernetics,” *Wikipedia*, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cybernetics&oldid=1211131381>.

23 Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon, *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method and Practice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

be made up and without validation about 3% of the time,<sup>24</sup> a problem AI engineers continue to address and the general public ponders in discerning what is “real,” beyond more intentional disinformation and fakes.

Some critics of AI’s role in philanthropic interactions have noted that AI’s tendency to enable deep fakes might exacerbate some grant applicants’ exaggeration or omission of relevant information, and some funders lack of transparency about their actual processes for making awards or tracking past grants results. It remains to be seen how extensive a role AI actually plays in deceptive practices, especially since funders and nonprofit leaders are keenly aware of the dangers, as noted throughout this essay. This problem, of course, is cross-sector and has the potential to affect almost every aspect of life. Only time and experience will determine how disinformation and fraud can be constrained, but AI itself may offer at least some means of detection and revelation, as Arijit Goswami suggested in a World Economic Forum blog titled, “Is AI the only antidote to disinformation?” while worrying that “the stability of our society is more threatened by disinformation than anything else we can imagine”.<sup>25</sup> The model proposed by Von Foerster, of course, was itself susceptible to false information since deceptive practices in philanthropy, as other human interactions, have long been around. However, cybernetics uses “information” in a more prescribed formulation than ordinary language usage suggests.

Philanthropy is, at its core, a deeply human and personal set of interactions based on trust and purpose, relying on “ordinary” language familiar to and accepted by those who use it, even when specialized language of contracts and formal agreements, for example, may require interpretation and definition beyond “ordinary” understanding. Everyday communication is complicated, prone to error and misunderstanding, but it generally works. Information and communication in AI, with its underlying information theories and cybernetics, use these same terms in specialized, scientific, technological, and mathematical ways as discussed subsequently. There is no easy way to differentiate a word such as “information” as it is used in ordinary discourse from, say, a cybernetic application.

We call attention to this situation early in this essay to alert the reader to very different contextual meanings associated with words such as “information.” We intend our use of the term to be that of ordinary discourse. We note that among current creators of AI systems, as well as cybernetic theorists, the concept of “information” has long been problematic, ambiguous, and ill-defined from its early use by Norbert Weiner, a founder of cybernetics,

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24 Cade Metz, “Chatbots May ‘Hallucinate’ More Often Than Many Realize,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2023, sec. Technology.

25 Arijit Goswami, “Is AI the Only Antidote to Disinformation?” *World Economic Forum*, July 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/disinformation-ai-technology/>.

who offered a Delphic definition: “information is information, not energy or matter.” Claude Shannon, Weiner’s collaborator, added to the uncertainty of meaning when commenting on Weiner’s definition, noting “it is hardly to be expected that a single concept of information would satisfactorily account for numerous possible applications of this general field [i.e., information theory and cybernetics]”.<sup>26</sup>

As critics and advocates alike have pointed out, the balance between AI’s capacity to do good and to do evil is unknown, although the ability for deception, misinformation, algorithmic errors (“hallucinations”), and fraud taking form as “information” are all possible and highly probable. Therein lies an irony that the cybernetic model Von Foerster proposes relies on information that AI has made problematic because it can be manipulated and used to deceive as well as “communicate.”

### THE BIG QUESTION: AI USE’S IMPACT ON MARGINALIZED RECIPIENTS WHOSE PERSPECTIVES ARE OFTEN EXCLUDED

As was the case in 1974, a major unknown about cybernetics and AI centers on impacts for often excluded perspectives in determining the rules of operation: Whether these powerful tools can not only be more inclusive, equitable, and just, but whether they can “act” without bias. As the nonprofit Why Philanthropy Matters asks, can they overcome “algorithmic bias’: where algorithms trained on data sets that reflect historical biases for factors like race or gender come to exhibit those same biases (and often strengthen them) over time?”<sup>27</sup> This question is of legitimate concern across the political, religious, and economic spectrums.

The same basic questions about diversity, inclusion, and equity in contemporary philanthropy haunt generative AI as much as did the hope that cybernetics might open the vexing social issues of the 1960s and 1970s to new approaches, new information, new definitions, new participants, and new solutions. AI as we currently know it depends on its ability to process human language as the basis of a machine’s “thinking” in video and pictorial outputs as well as verbal. AI programs that learn from large language models like ChatGPT can extract knowledge from unimaginably large numbers of people scattered across languages, cultures, history, and nations, going well beyond the

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26 Eugene Perevalov, “What is Information After All? How the Founder of Modern Dialectical Logic Could Help the Founder of Cybernetics Answer This Question,” Lehigh University, 2021, [https://engineering.lehigh.edu/sites/engineering.lehigh.edu/files/\\_DEPARTMENTS/ise/pdf/tech-papers/21/21T\\_004.pdf](https://engineering.lehigh.edu/sites/engineering.lehigh.edu/files/_DEPARTMENTS/ise/pdf/tech-papers/21/21T_004.pdf).

27 Why Philanthropy Matters, “Philanthropy & A.I. - Why Philanthropy Matters.” 2022, <https://whyphilanthropymatters.com/guide/the-future-of-philanthropy/philanthropy-a-i/>.

limits of familiar crowd-sourcing programs like Wikipedia (in itself a primary source for ChatGPT and the like).<sup>28</sup>

The prospects for more inclusive insights, concerns, and innovations through what has been called collective intelligence give funders the potential “to identify ‘under-the-radar’ groups and organisations working on particular causes or in particular local areas and reach out to them (rather than waiting for them to make a grant application)”.<sup>29</sup> As already noted, however, AI can also be used to create fake images, personal profiles, and even whole identities to fool grantmakers into believing they are hearing from—and including—actual but socially excluded people, leading to “unjust” giving because the intention of inclusiveness and diversity has been corrupted by the generative ability of algorithms. The very groups to whom philanthropy is directed may again be excluded, ironically, by insisting on their presence even if it is “artificial”. Addressing contemporary social, economic, environmental, health, and technological challenges appears to depend on the presence and actual participation of “the excluded middle,” what novelist Thomas Pynchon named and popularized in his 1965 novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, a prescient work that explores the implications of finding information in a digital world where there exist only binary choices—1 or zero, yes-no, open-closed, real-fake.<sup>30</sup> Life is not so simple, so defined, as Pynchon’s characters dramatize in their search for hidden meaning—between 1 and zero.

On this edge of a new AI-opened world during a time of exceptional societal challenge and change, institutional and individual philanthropists are grappling with how to help. Despite the scale of major gifts, philanthropists are struggling with how to engage—and support—those most in need, how to achieve specific goals in a timely manner, and how to assess the results. One obvious example of alternative approaches arises when a donor decides whether to restrict the purpose of a gift. There have been gifts of unprecedented magnitude and a widening range of purposes from those restricted by donors, such a Michael Bloomberg’s \$1.8 billion gift to Johns Hopkins University in 2018,<sup>31</sup> to McKenzie Scott’s unrestricted gifts totaling over \$16 billion to nearly 2,000 nonprofit organizations since 2019.<sup>32</sup>

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28 Jon Gertner, “Wikipedia’s Moment of Truth,” *New York Times*, July 18, 2023, sec. Magazine.

29 “Philanthropy & A.I. – Why Philanthropy Matters,” *Why Philanthropy Matters*, accessed October 21, 2024, <https://whyphilanthropymatters.com/guide/the-future-of-philanthropy/philanthropy-a-i/>.

30 Francisco Collado-Rodríguez, “Trespassing Limits: Pynchon’s Irony and the Law of the Excluded Middle,” *Oklahoma City University Law Review* 24 (1999): 471.

31 Bloomberg Philanthropies, “Johns Hopkins University” *Bloomberg Philanthropies* (blog), 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.org/founders-projects/johns-hopkins-university/>.

32 Yield Giving, “Gifts.”

While some mega-donors make gifts with their own certainty of purpose, several institutional donors have conspicuously sought less hierarchical, more participatory ways of giving to address historic inequities and to integrate those not usually engaged in the processes of giving. The mix of certainty and uncertainty of purpose has invited government—and political—scrutiny of philanthropy, especially to institutions of higher education, as reflected in the “donor revolt” over the positions academic leaders took with regard to Hamas’ attack on Israel, the Israel-Hamas war, antisemitism, and empathy for Gazans.<sup>33</sup> The 2024 political critiques of DEI more broadly, especially in higher education, have posed particular “problems” for regulating AI with regard to issues of bias because of the moral and linguistic ambiguity of competing value systems.

While certainly unique in many ways, the current challenges facing philanthropists considering or applying AI to improve philanthropy are not new. Indeed, a 2021 report detailed multiple examples of “philanthropic activities related to artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data science technology”.<sup>34</sup> While decidedly not a priority for public and scientific applications of AI, philanthropic organizations have not been inattentive to the looming impact and potential. There is genuine interest in how philanthropy can better engage, listen to, and understand those whom it is expected to benefit.

One relatively new interest of some foundations and philanthropists has been using assessment to uncover some of the unknowns and uncertainties of giving with a purpose, especially as “purpose” may inherently reflect biases and be conditioned by past successes or failures. While not widely embraced, goal-free evaluation has made its way into philanthropic organizations as a supplement to more traditional goal-based evaluations. The methodology relies on screening the evaluator(s) from knowing what the stated or imputed goal(s) of the philanthropy were.

In a 2014 essay intended to promote goal-free evaluation to foundations, the authors stated: “The goal-free evaluator attempts to observe and measure all actual outcomes, effects, or impacts, intended or unintended, all without being cued to the program’s intentions”.<sup>35</sup> Goal-free evaluation has not significantly impacted traditional evaluations of the results of philanthropy, but its origins in the early 1970s resonate with Von Foerster’s model. It has played a

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33 The Chronicle of Philanthropy, “Donor Revolts, Fundraising Fallout, and Why the Ivy League’s Turmoil Matters to All Nonprofits,” *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, December 15, 2023, sec. Opinion.

34 Patricia Herzog, H. Naik, and H. Kahn. 2021. “AIMS Philanthropy Project: Studying AI, Machine Learning & Data Science for Good,” *Indiana University*, 2021.

35 Brandon W. Youker and Allyssa Ingraham, “Goal-Free Evaluation: An Orientation for Foundations’ Evaluations,” *The Foundation Review* 5, no. 4 (2014): 6–20, <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/tfr/vol5/iss4/3>.

role in assessing or at least questioning the results of unrestricted giving and contributed to the rise of other evaluation theories, such as developmental and adaptive evaluation and, more recently, “equitable evaluation,” which has been especially attractive to social justice grantmaking.<sup>36</sup>

## BEFORE ARTIFICIAL GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

The beginnings of these speculations about AI and philanthropy begin in the 1970s—if not earlier. Von Foerster’s paper posed a “cybernetics of philanthropy,” based on information theory, to aid philanthropists in identifying a “good cause” and ensuring that the use of their wealth would actually have a “good effect”.<sup>37</sup>

Von Foerster’s work was greatly influenced by his participation in the Macy Conferences, sponsored by the Josiah Macy Jr Foundation from 1941 to 1960, based on the “Foundation’s conviction in organizing interdisciplinary conferences as platforms for advancing knowledge”<sup>38</sup> to encourage and facilitate communication across scientific disciplines. A specific series of meetings related to cybernetics, which conference participant Margaret Mead defined as “a form of cross-disciplinary thought which made it possible for members of many disciplines to communicate with each other easily in a language which all could understand”.<sup>39</sup> The cybernetics series lasted from 1946 to 1953.<sup>40</sup> The meetings were one of the earliest explorations of interdisciplinarity, which held considerable importance for philanthropy in years to come. It was Von Foerster who applied cybernetics to philanthropy.

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36 Miles Wilson, “Social Justice and a Relevant Philanthropic Sector: Evaluation,” *The Center for Effective Philanthropy*, April 16, 2020, <https://cep.org/social-justice-and-a-relevant-philanthropic-sector-evaluation/>.

37 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”.

38 Christopher Tudico, *The History of the Josia Macy Jr. Foundation*, edited by George E. Thibault (New York: Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, 2012).

39 Margaret Mead, “Cybernetics on Cybernetics,” In *Purposive Systems: Proceedings of the First Annual Symposium of the American Society for Cybernetics*, edited by Heinz Von Foerster and American Society for Cybernetics (New York: Spartan Books, 1968).

40 Heinz von Foerster once commented on defining cybernetics, “That is the fascinating thing about cybernetics. You ask a couple of people to give you a definition and although you don’t get to know much about cybernetics from them, you find out a lot about the person supplying the definition, including their area of expertise, their relation to the world, their desire to play with metaphors, their enthusiasm for management, and their interest in communications or message theory” (Heinz von Foerster, “Definitions of ‘Cybernetics,’” *American Society for Cybernetics*, 2024). Von Foerster is also credited with saying that cybernetics “interfaces hard competence with the hard problems of the soft sciences” (Heinz von Foerster, “Old Website,” *American Society for Cybernetics*, 2024). The authors, accordingly, stipulate that they claim no expertise in AI, cybernetics, or information theory, instead suggesting a comparative perspective on how AI may offer benefits to purposeful philanthropy in the 2020s.

According to cybernetics, an observer—such as a philanthropist—has a relationship with information—such as the understanding of a purpose to which a gift is to be directed—that is affected by the observer’s own prior knowledge and experience. The implication is that the action supported by philanthropy is at least affected, if not determined, by the observer/philanthropist’s drawing on past knowledge to define the challenge to be addressed. Von Foerster’s particular contribution to this discussion was, in essence, making clear that the philanthropist is also a participant and not a detached, objective outside observer to the action or purpose of the gift. He sought to use this self-awareness of the funder’s own participation to help in reflecting ethically on actions being taken and to recognize the value of new knowledge, information, and perspectives for defining and acting on the challenge or problem.

Behind the language of cybernetics and information theory, beyond the mathematics and formulae, there is a very basic message in “Giving with a Purpose” that resonates with challenges of the 2020s. In essence, Von Foerster proposes a way for foundations and other philanthropists—philanthropic agents—to become learning organizations that can evolve based on their ability to find and use *new* information. The Macy Conferences were inspired in part because of the need to bring new approaches—new sciences, including social science—to bear on big issues, big challenges: “Hard competence to deal with the hard problems,” as Von Foerster said. The same circumstance is leading philanthropists, especially institutional philanthropists, to learn new approaches in this new era of technological possibilities. None holds more interest than AI, with all of its promise and liability.

When identifying a good cause is based largely on stable and self-referencing systems—as reflected in the actions of foundation professional staff who request proposals to address needs, which they have already defined—there is an inherent loss of potential new information and ideas from other sources and needs. Solutions are already prescribed by the definition of the problem to be addressed. Von Foerster’s model defines a process for learning through diversification to gather new information. His effort to leapfrog out of the dominant funding models of the 1970s represents an important learning opportunity for philanthropists in the 2020s. His intent reverberates in the many innovations, changes in operations, and commitments to inclusiveness being explored in the 2020s by individual philanthropists and foundations. Yet, those in need still have limited venues for saying what would be most helpful to them out of their own experiences—and they may sometimes be “represented” by machine-created fakes.

Over the past 50 years, those in need have become more vocal in expressing their exclusion than their counterparts of half a century ago, due to greater tolerance for listening, to more means of personal expression (often following catalytic events), and to the immediacy and intimacy of social media. Yet

AI seems to hold considerably more promise for addressing this critical need with seemingly greater attraction than cybernetics held for foundation leaders in the 1970s, thanks in large measure to experiments being tried under such banners as trust-based philanthropy, participatory grant making, or rights-balancing fundraising. As noted earlier, evaluation of philanthropy—whether purpose has been addressed—also shapes future giving and while there is hardly a significant culture change among foundations or the more affluent individual donors in how they view results, the still early and evolving methods of determining the effects, benefits, and unintended results of specific philanthropic acts remain open questions for scholars and donors alike. Change may be underway, but cautiously, even with the rapid adoption of many AI generated tools.

### FIFTY YEARS AFTER “GIVING WITH A PURPOSE”

In many respects, Von Foerster’s proposed system of decision-making anticipated the current debate about how foundations and individual donors of large amounts should make decisions. Information becomes more important; data are critical; and for many, self-awareness of what is not known leads to new avenues of exploration. Mackenzie Scott, for example, startled the philanthropic establishment with her “black box” approach to identifying worthy recipients without prior identification of her goal or purpose—and without contacting or consulting those to whom she made gifts.<sup>41</sup> More startling, she made her gifts without restriction, relying on the discretion of those to whom the funds were entrusted.<sup>42</sup> She has largely relied on intermediaries who, presumably, are more attuned to the voices of the excluded.<sup>43</sup> Scott began her *Medium* post explaining her donations with a simple plea: “I want to de-emphasize privileged voices and cede focus to others”.<sup>44</sup>

The lasting impact of Scott’s approach to giving is uncertain, but the scale of her commitment to unrestricted giving—and to trusting the voice of those most in touch with the issues instead of her own definition—has sparked

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41 Marybeth Gasman, Resche Hines, and Angela Henderson, “The MacKenzie Scott Donations to Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Exploring the Data Landscape” (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2021).

42 Genevieve Shaker and Pamala Wiepking, “What Is Unrestricted Funding? Two Philanthropy Experts Explain.” *The Conversation*, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/what-is-unrestricted-funding-two-philanthropy-experts-explain-164589>.

43 Drew Lindsay, “What MacKenzie Scott Wants in a Grantee — A New Analysis Offers Clues,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, 2024, <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/what-mackenzie-scott-wants-in-a-grantee-a-new-analysis-offers-clues>.

44 MacKenzie Scott, “Seeding by Ceding.” *Medium* (blog), 2021, <https://mackenzie-scott.medium.com/seeding-by-ceding-ea6de642bf>.

considerable interest among nonprofits and foundations.<sup>45</sup> Early in 2023, Scott expanded her experiments in giving by creating an open call for applications from small nonprofits (with budgets between \$1 and \$5 million) but with initial “Participatory Review by other applicants using publicly posted evaluation criteria”<sup>46</sup> to ensure that the voices of those most impacted by her gifts had a critical role. The results were announced in 2024. Decidedly not a return to “conventional” grantmaking despite engaging an expert panel of reviewers following the participatory review and relying on the intermediary Lever for Change to manage the process, the open call can be seen as yet one more way to introduce new, previously unknown or unrecognized “information” and participants into the pool of eligibility. As the Center for Effective Philanthropy has noted, her “system” appears to be intentionally designed for change: “Rather than start a new foundation, her team is a mix of existing organizations, from a donor advised fund to Bridgespan and Lever for Change. She’s using an array of available organizational tools that allow flexibility in tactics and duration”.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, the actual results and impact of Scott’s giving (and other giving inspired by her highly publicized approach to philanthropy) remain to be seen. They may not be fully assessed for a decade or more, especially if some of the more innovative approaches to assessment offer atypical insights into consequences, methods, and meaning or value. The role of AI tools thus far appears to be marginal to the overall approaches to philanthropy inspired by Scott. Yet to the extent an emphasis on social justice and increased inclusiveness remains central to future philanthropy, there may well be a role for AI in data gathering, identifying unrecognized participants, or assessing results. Given the infancy of AI development, it is impractical to predict the eventual roles such tools may play, especially without guard rails to separate the fake from the real.

While Scott’s disruptive philanthropy galvanized attention on her own unusual process of giving, she is not alone in recognizing that urgent societal needs require new approaches. Many philanthropists abruptly modified past practices to address the pressing needs stemming from the global pandemic,

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45 Ellie Buteau, Elisha Smith Arrillaga, and Christina Im, “The Effects of Mackenzie Scott’s Large, Unrestricted Gifts: Results from Year Two of a Three-Year Study,” *Center for Effective Philanthropy*, 2023, [https://cep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BigGiftsStudy\\_Report\\_Y2\\_FNL.pdf](https://cep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BigGiftsStudy_Report_Y2_FNL.pdf).

46 Lever for Change, “Yield Giving Launches New \$250 Million Open Call to Elevate US Nonprofits Advancing the Voices and Opportunities of Their Communities,” *Lever for Change*, 2023, <https://www.leverforchange.org/learning/news/yield-giving-launches-new-250-million-open-call-to-elevate-us-nonprofits-advancing-the-voices-and-opportunities-of-their-communities/>.

47 Bob Hughes, “What Can We Learn from MacKenzie Scott’s Pivot to an ‘Open Call’ Giving Approach?” *The Center for Effective Philanthropy* (blog), 2023, <https://cep.org/what-can-we-learn-from-mackenzie-scotts-pivot-to-an-open-call-giving-approach/>.

the social, racial, economic, and gender justice movements, and the heightened polarization of communities made apparent in the early 2020s. Yet a few individual philanthropists—with privileged voices, as Scott might say—making very large gifts and upset with university presidents’ responses to antisemitism stemming from the war in Gaza, have threatened to withhold their philanthropy, ironically, because the recipients are not listening to *them*. Of course, trustees and large donors have long exerted influence, enough to warrant the issuance of the American Association of University Professors’ founding statement, the 1915 “Declaration on Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure”,<sup>48</sup> yet the recent intervention of donors has raised anew the undue influence donors might have on recipients’ actions far beyond the purposes of the donors’ gifts. Why should the donor of a basketball arena to a college have a say on whether to retain a DEI office or terminate a gender studies program? Early in this new era, the eventual impact of donor disruption is as unknown as Scott’s, and AI may have little to say about donor activism.

In 2020, the Ford Foundation took the unusual step of borrowing \$1 billion to respond immediately to the emerging crises: “Unprecedented times call for extraordinary solutions, and that’s why we issued a social bond—the first ever by a foundation on the United States taxable corporate bond market—to ensure nonprofits can carry on their important work to serve the world’s most vulnerable communities”.<sup>49</sup> They were not alone in changing their process of giving with a purpose nor, under Darren Walker’s leadership, taking a focus on social justice with the 2015 “Building Institutions and Networks Initiative (BUILD),” renewed in 2021.<sup>50</sup> While the means of creating the “extra” capacity to give was novel, the identification and attainment of purpose remain works in process as the Foundation appears to be following the established practice of identifying future programming based on past success.

Likewise, the Rockefeller Foundation committed to spending a billion dollars or more over three years “to catalyze a recovery from this crisis that delivers a more equitable and sustainable recovery and helps guard against future pandemics.”<sup>51</sup> As with Ford, the Rockefeller Foundation decision process remains essentially the same despite the recognition of exceptional times

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48 Nicholus Dirks, “Higher Education’s Donor Problem,” *TIME*, January 11, 2024, <https://time.com/6554359/university-donor-problem-essay/>.

49 Pioneers Post, “Ford Foundation Announces ‘historic’ \$1bn Social Bond,” *Pioneers Post*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.pioneerspost.com/news-views/20200612/ford-foundation-announces-historic-1bn-social-bond>

50 Ford Foundation, “FAQs: BUILD Grants,” Ford Foundation, 2021, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/news-and-press/news/faqs-build-grants/>.

51 Rockefeller Foundation, “Transforming a Billion Lives: The Job Creation Potential from a Green Power Transition in the Energy Poor World,” *The Rockefeller Foundation* (blog), 2021, <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/report/transforming-a-billion-lives-the-job-creation-potential-from-a-green-power-transition-in-the-energy-poor-world/>.

and exceptional needs: “For more consequential outcomes, we channel our resources and expertise into a finite set of endeavors to assure measurable and meaningful impact”.<sup>52</sup> Yet the Foundation has also recognized that conditions require accelerated innovation: “We leverage our research, analysis, funding, and partnering capabilities to ensure that the most advanced data science, artificial intelligence, and machine learning tools are deployed in ways that empower underserved communities, bridge knowledge gaps, prevent harm, and increase equity”.<sup>53</sup>

In mid-2021, the Strada Education Network issued a symptomatic report, reflecting a growing sense that this is a transformative period in philanthropy. *Pathways to Impact* acknowledges that “historically, organizations promoting social welfare or the common good fell into three broad categories: funders (private foundations, corporate foundations, public charities and more), doers (both those that provide direct service as well as operating nonprofits like museums), and connectors (those offering best practices, sector-building or collective impact)”.<sup>54</sup> The report alleges that these traditional levers of change are now integrating the three spheres of influence “through a systems lens . . . merging all three of these approaches, bringing multifaceted solutions to bear on complex problems”.<sup>55</sup> The authors cite, in particular, the Omidyar Group, the Emerson Collective, and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative as early actors. And there are many others, large and small, organizational and personal. Yet the actual impact that this kind of systems thinking may have on increased, bias-free inclusiveness is unknown—just as the degree of self-awareness of participant-observer foundation officers remains opaque.

Clearly, philanthropists have not been left in the 1970s in their thinking about how best to give with purpose. Innovation and attention to historically excluded views are key considerations.

## UNCERTAINTY MAY NOT BE BAD, BUT WE CAN LEARN FROM HISTORY

Without the hindsight of fifty years of subsequent change, Von Foerster observed that established and safety-minded funders “move toward a stable and

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52 Rockefeller Foundation, “Transforming a Billion Lives.”

53 Rockefeller Foundation, “Transforming a Billion Lives.”

54 Strada Education Network, “Pathways to Impact: From College Access to Completion with a Purpose,” *Strada Education Network*, 2021, <https://stradaeducation.org/report/pathways-to-impact-from-college-access-to-completion-with-a-purpose/>.

55 E. P. Burns and M. B. Horn, “Pathways to Impact: The Rise Adn Rationale for a New Breed of Social Impact Organizations.” *Whiteboard Advisors: Strada Education Network*, 2021, [https://whiteboardadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Strada\\_Whitepaper\\_2021\\_Final.pdf](https://whiteboardadvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Strada_Whitepaper_2021_Final.pdf).

sterile uniformity, with all diversity lost”.<sup>56</sup> Intermediaries respond to philanthropists’ stated purposes and guidelines for submission in ways that inherently narrow the possibilities of proposals to preconceived definitions of needs and issues. Creative intermediaries respond, of course, with rich flourishes of new ideas and fresh language, but Von Foerster suggests “what is lost in semantic richness of intuitive notions is off-set by a gain in precision”<sup>57</sup> if funders welcome uncertainty by listening to voices that are more diverse, unknown, and unheard and if they consider ideas that do not have a proven track record of past success. Calls in the 2020s for a change in giving practices and purposes echo Von Foerster’s cybernetic model—a systems approach, though not quite what Strada has proposed.

Although Von Foerster’s paper dives deeply and quickly into cybernetics, cognitive science, and mathematical constructs more familiar to those building algorithms and designing computer codes that find, analyze, and repurpose data (information), his basic proposition is imminently relevant and accessible to academics and practitioners of philanthropy as well as the leaders of nonprofits that are the interface of most philanthropic intent. Leaving information theory and algorithm design to specialists, generalists can still learn plenty from their self-conscious explanations of what Von Foerster’s model might mean for their own work in grantmaking, fundraising, and nonprofit management, especially when recalling what he said about what you can learn from asking people to define cybernetics.

As a perspective for reading a novel concept now separated by fifty years from its creation, we offer consideration of a striking parallel of the social context of the 1970s to the 2020s—a time when societal needs and priorities are being seen anew—not as known, defined, and solvable needs and problems but now as something unfamiliar and unsolved, something that requires new ideas, new purposes, new information. Von Foerster may just have written fifty years before philanthropists and foundations were really ready to embrace uncertainty—and new information—that could actually change things for the better.

The years just before and after 1974 were a period of disruption as consequential as we have experienced in 2020–2024 with the global pandemic, social movements challenging the conventional views of social justice, income inequality, individual versus communal rights, systemic gender and racial bias, privacy rights, extremely politicalized ideas of governance, the value of postsecondary education, globalization and neoliberalism, and automation among others. While the early 2020s have seen an unprecedented response of philanthropists to many of these issues and events, the role of philanthropists

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56 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”, p. 9.

57 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”, p. 9.

in deciding how and where to apply resources and actions is being questioned as fiercely as any time in history. This awareness recalls Edwin Embree's direct question in his influential 1949 *Harper's* essay, "Timid Billions: Are Foundations Doing Their Job." He asked the question that we still might ask today: "Are foundations showing the imagination and resourcefulness on social issues that their founders showed in business and that modern society so desperately needs"?<sup>58</sup>

## THE FORMATIVE SEVENTIES

In 1974, Richard Nixon resigned as president, there was an energy crisis, racial tensions remained volatile, the cold war was still on, the Vietnam war had just officially ended, and *Giving USA* found that giving in the U.S. had dropped 5.5%.<sup>59</sup> There was a recession and enormous economic, social, and political uncertainty as a result of the war and the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination—and passage of the voting rights act in 1965.

In 1961 Congressman Wright Patman began a personal, eight year campaign against foundations that revealed widespread concern about "abusive foundation practices" and concern about "elitism for those who leveraged private philanthropy for self-gain" as stated in a 1965 Treasury Department report on private foundations.<sup>60</sup> In 1967, the Treasury Department reported that 21 people—most of whom were philanthropists—with annual incomes in excess of \$1 million paid no taxes, as did many others with very high incomes. By 1969 Wilbur Mills, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, held hearings focused on foundations and philanthropic practices, resulting in the Tax Reform Act of 1969 that restricted foundations' involvement in political affairs and required a minimum percentage of assets to be distributed each year for charitable purposes.<sup>61</sup> The act and the events leading up to it have largely been attributed to public disenchantment with foundations' self-dealing, tax avoidance, and accumulation of wealth without "meaningful" distribution of assets.<sup>62</sup>

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58 Edwin R. Embree, "Timid Billions: Are the Foundations Doing Their Job?" *Harper's Magazine* 198, no. 1186 (1949): 28–37.

59 Giving USA, "16 Data Tables for Charts in the Numbers," *Giving USA*, 2014, [https://givingusa.org/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce\\_uploads/2014/12/Giving-USA-2014-Data-Tables.pdf](https://givingusa.org/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2014/12/Giving-USA-2014-Data-Tables.pdf).

60 Committee on Finance, United States Senate, "Treasury Department Report on Private Foundations," (Stanford University, 1965), <https://books.google.com/books?id=gO8ikx3rmJwC&printsec=copyright#v=onepage&q&cf=false>.

61 Thomas A. Troyer, "The 1969 Private Foundation Law: Historical Perspective on Its Origins and Underpinnings," *Philanthropy Europe Association*, 2000, <https://philea.issuelab.org/resource/the-1969-private-foundation-law-historical-perspective-on-its-origins-and-underpinnings.html>.

62 Von Foerster, "Giving with a Purpose".

Six months later, the Peterson Commission on foundations and private philanthropy was launched with the intent to influence policy and deter further legislation that might limit philanthropy.<sup>63</sup> The Commission argued for the importance of distinguishing between foundations and the charitable organizations to which they gave money as well as advocating greater evaluation of results and greater transparency. Funders, doers, and connectors were separated. By February of 1971, the public mood had shifted so much that the esteemed National Science Foundation had created the controversial Research Applied to National Need (RANN) program.<sup>64</sup> Its focus on applied research aroused fears that RANN would take money away from traditional basic science research and, to the dismay of some, introduced social sciences as key disciplines in defining “needs” as well as the perspectives that should be heard in defining needs as problems to be solved.

In 1973 John D. Rockefeller created the “Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs” and asked John Filer to lead the project.<sup>65</sup> With extensive participation of over 100 experts and concerned parties, the Commission concluded its work in 1975 based on more than 80 research studies with a report now regarded as one of the most important examinations of philanthropy ever—and the catalyst for a number of countless follow-up studies that continue today. It recommended the creation of the Independent Sector coalition and precipitated the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in part because of inattention to excluded communities and needs.<sup>66</sup>

Among the Commission’s many recommendations deemed more urgent and important, it also modestly recommended that nonprofits and funders, in particular, account for changing viewpoints and emerging needs by listening to more inclusive boards, staffs, and recipients. The Commission suggested being more transparent and holding public meetings to discuss the projects and plans underway in an effort to recognize needs that might not be “known.” It was during the two years of the Filer Commission’s work that Von Foerster wrote his essay on “Giving with a Purpose: The Cybernetics of Philanthropy” as a scientific approach to address the troubling concerns of a broad spectrum of society—from Congress to disenfranchised communities with unrecognized and neglected needs.

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63 Rob Kaufold, “The Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy,” *Learning to Give*, 2017. <https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/commission-foundations-and-private-philanthropy>.

64 Richard J. Green and Wil Lepkowski, “A Forgotten Model for Purposeful Science,” *Issues in Science and Technology* 22, no. 2 (2006): 69–73.

65 Eleanor L. Brilliant, *Private Charity and Public Inquiry: A History of the Filer and Peterson Commissions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

66 Pablo Eisenberg, “The Filer Commission and the Birth of NCRP,” *HistPhil* (blog), March 2, 2016, <https://histphil.org/2016/03/02/the-filer-commission-and-the-birth-of-ncrp/>.

## UPDATING CYBERNETICS' RELEVANCE TO PHILANTHROPY

Cybernetics offers a means and a mechanism—what cybernetics defines as an “automated system of control”—to address several of the most important issues identified by the critics of philanthropic practice in the 1960-70s. The system purports to address a number of issues: (1) that most funders define new and emerging needs from the perspective of the past—what is known, has been tried, and is successful; (2) that new needs are largely addressed by defining new problems by old solutions—often reflected in calls for proposals to address specific circumstances; (3) that funders define problems without understanding what those in need could bring to finding solutions; and (4) that most funders confuse development (building what is known from the past) with innovation.

Von Foerster makes the case “that in times of social-cultural continuity, this approach [supporting intermediaries—primarily nonprofits—that respond to funders’ definitions of needs] appears indeed to achieve the purpose to which the founders [of a funding entity] have addressed themselves, for the needs in the past that created those [intermediaries] still exist in the present”.<sup>67</sup> Von Foerster asserts that new needs and problems—and newly affected people—require innovation to resolve them: New voices, new information, and new questions that challenge the legitimacy of the presumed solutions. He suggests that when society has changed, on the other hand, the past is not the best predictor of how to address new needs or respond to the disenfranchised. Conserving the past needs to make room for experimentation. From the perspective of how society has changed by 2024, Von Foerster could easily be addressing the need for solutions to global pandemics, migration, systemic racial injustice and inequity, income disparity, climate change, and more.

To overcome this reliance on what is known, he created a model for a self-organizing learning system that changes safe and stable questions being asked about new needs to new questions that challenge the legitimacy of the biases brought from past experiences by well-meaning people who may not recognize their own biases about what needs exist, what problems need solutions. Hence the idea of eliminating the possibility of doing the same thing over and over.

Von Foerster’s automatic system of control includes a goal and four “moving” parts:<sup>68</sup>

- *The Goal*: The means to achieve a purpose (address a need).
- *Observation*: The observed state of affairs of society or an issue within society, which reflects the subjectivity of the observer since one observer

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67 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”.

68 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”, pp. 4-5.

may not perceive what another does.

- *A Comparator*: Essentially, a computer that compares the goal with the observed state of affairs and can recognize whether or not they are the same; if they are, then the goal is achieved but when they are not the same, the comparator functions to diminish the difference between the goal and the observed state of affairs by relying on an effector.
- *The Effector*: The means by which the comparator can reduce discrepancy to achieve the goal, which most often is achieved by a funder giving money to an intermediary.
- *The Decider*: The agency that decides to fund or not fund the actions of an effector, and effectively a combination of the Goal, Observation, and Comparator.

In a seminal paragraph, Von Foerster (1974) summarizes the system of control he envisions:

It becomes evident that while a strategy of funding which tends to minimize uncertainty may increase an agency's feeling of security and even give it a record of flawless success, such a strategy will, at the same time, be counterproductive for an agency whose aim is to perceive new needs and problems in a changing society. Such an agency will have to risk walking untrodden paths toward new questions and new solutions. In coping with this problem the question arises: whether a strategy that *maximizes* uncertainty can be designed so that it may be *rationaly* defended while it includes the "irrational" new.<sup>69</sup>

The rest of Von Foerster's essay is devoted to developing the algorithms for maximizing and generating uncertainty, as the effective way to truly address new needs and for a philanthropic agent to learn from its own experience of grant-making.

The traditional approach to funding creates a feedback loop to reduce uncertainty with the goal of maximizing the desired effects. But there is a loss in the system of totally new, unknown, untried, and uncertain approaches—none of which can pass the customary evaluation processes. One way to overcome this is diversification. The cybernetic model Von Foerster proposes addresses this more complexly than can be easily summarized here (especially since the full text is available and the authors of this essay are not expert in discussing cybernetics or AI). Put simply, the model offers a system for generating more solutions to problems by increased numbers of smaller grants whose implementation contributes new information to a different kind of feedback

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69 Von Foerster, "Giving with a Purpose", p. 7.

loop that “feeds” both the funder and the social groups to which funding and projects have been targeted. The new information may be as valuable to the affected population, or more so, than the grant-funded interventions. Diversification through experimentation (doing what’s not been done before) reaching more communities by spreading funding, however, does not preclude larger gifts and philanthropic investments, especially those that may follow from information gained through the smaller, diverse grants intended to generate new insights.

It is here that we pause in our description of the cybernetic proposal and turn directly to the Von Foerster paper. He can speak most clearly to the model he proposes. Those who read his proposal and imagine its application to their own philanthropic work will best assess whether there is practical value or whether he has proposed a 20<sup>th</sup> century version of “The Engine” that Gulliver found at the Academy of Projectors, where “everyone knows how laborious the usual method is of attaining to arts and sciences. . .”<sup>70</sup> There is no short cut in using cybernetics, but there may be a means of addressing one of our current and most vexing issues for philanthropy: How to give with a purpose and *actually* do good for those to whom help is intended. Von Foerster again, this time citing David Horton Smith, author of the CVS Occasional Paper # 2, “Research and Communication Needs in Voluntary Action”:<sup>71</sup>

A good example of such an instance lies among the volunteers, whose impact in the varied social strata of this nation has barely been tapped, and whose first-hand knowledge of the various social concerns of the funding organizations could provide the catalytic information needed for new choices.<sup>72</sup>

Volunteers, it seems, appeared to Von Foerster to provide a means of increasing diversity and information through the different backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge of people from across social, economic, political, and religious strata drawn together for a common purpose.

It is apparent as of this writing, that this nation, this world, are still desperately awaiting the catalytic information needed for new choices. John Dixon’s introduction to “Giving with a Purpose” in 1974 defines it as a time when there was the need for a “method for getting at the basic causes of social

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70 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), cited in “Jonathan Swift and Thomas S. Kuhn | Conversation,” *Lapham’s Quarterly*, <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/conversations/jonathan-swift-thomas-s-kuhn>.

71 Everett A. Smith, “A Decade in Review: A Systematic Literature Review of Presidential Engagement in Community College Fundraising,” *Journal of Research on the College President* 5 (December 2021).

72 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”.

continuity and discontinuity,” which remains the case to this day.<sup>73</sup> Dixon says, “Private philanthropy and charitable foundations, under attack as the balance of political and economic power changes, are being forced to justify their very existence. In the face of ambiguity, uncertainty and risk they are struggling to redefine their purposes and learn new responsibilities.” And so, the struggle continues; even though in the intervening fifty years foundations have learned how to adapt, the abruptness of social and political change can overwhelm even the most cautious.

### WHAT, THEN, DO WE DO WITH A FIFTY-YEAR OLD IDEA?

We are not proposing a *specific* action, such as applying his cybernetic model, as a result of revisiting Von Foerster’s concept of how to improve philanthropic results by addressing “purpose” in new ways. We are certainly not suggesting that grantmaking be delegated to AI. To do so without taking into account the history of an interval replete with so many consequential changes in philanthropic actions and motivations—to say nothing of advances in AI and other technologies—would be irrational, especially because AI remains something of an enigma. However, the urgency of the multiple global crises confronting society surely calls for new ideas and new strategies even beyond the experiments and commitments to increased inclusiveness following the pandemic and a seemingly endless expansion of major challenges in the 2020s—especially from philanthropists and philanthropic organizations unfettered by political agendas in a polarized environment. We leave any application of Von Foerster’s 1974 paper to those who read it fifty years later and draw their own conclusions. We simply think the paper is worth reading and considering in the light of what AI portends.

In one form or another, many social analysts are asking for a philanthropic “moon shot,” as Arabella advisor Loren McArthur urged in a call for new forms of philanthropic action: “We are living in an age of catastrophe, and a business-as-usual response from philanthropy is not acceptable.”<sup>74</sup> Wholly new and different approaches are required as Amir Pasic, Dean of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, suggested when he asked:

What then, of our time? Will we see novel institutions emerge to meet the grand challenges ahead?

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Despite heroic efforts in responding to the pandemic and the associated

73 J. Dixon, “Introduction,” in *Giving with a Purpose: The Cybernetics of Philanthropy*, edited by Heinz von Foerster and Von Foerster, Occasional Paper #5 (Washington D.C.: Center for a Voluntary Society, 1974).

74 Loren McArthur, “Philanthropy Must Confront This Era of Catastrophe with a Moonshot Response,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, September 8, 2021.

economic and social crises, I don't see a coming surge in new institutional models. Instead, when I do see institutions being embraced, I see a devotion to current institutions, efforts to shore them up, and campaigns to recommit to the norms and principles that serve as their bedrock. Like a rubber band, we are stretching, poised to snap back when the stress subsides.<sup>75</sup>

In all of the responses noted in our comparison of the present day with the 1970s, many philanthropists and foundations are responding with bold actions, moon shots, but yet they are doing so largely in forms that inherently recommit to the norms and principles that seem to have been less successful than hoped—in the US and much of the rest of the world. There are exceptions, such as Edgar Villanueva's Decolonizing Wealth Project, which focuses on "radical reparative giving" to address social ills and the goal of making racial equity a social norm.<sup>76</sup> Or the Generosity AI Working Group, which argues that "responsible adoption of AI and LLMs [large language models] across the social sector is critical to drive new opportunities for fundraising, engaging supporters, and promoting generosity" and is creating a "a collaborative community of practice to inform research, product development, and best practices".<sup>77</sup> And there are dedicated analysts like Lucy Bernholz, whose *Philanthropy 2173* blog and annual "Blueprint" predictions keep followers focused on the central issue raised by Von Foerster with a sense of humility about how much we think we know: "As sure as we are of ourselves now, talking about the future - and making philanthropic investments - requires that we keep a sense of modesty and humor about what we are doing".<sup>78</sup> Whether any of the adaptations—or predictions--being made by philanthropic agents will succeed post-pandemic and post-political polarization remains an open question. Yet the hope of AI's unknown potential tantalizes.

We speculate that Von Forester offers two paths for bold action, equally risky but decidedly "different" from the bedrock of assumptions of most philanthropic initiatives. One is Von Forester's clear call for generating new *information*, in its cybernetic sense, that can serve as the basis for new actions (who to fund by what means with what expectations) by hearing from new voices—those typically filtered out when there are requests for proposals be-

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75 Amir Pasic, "Can It Be? No New Institutions Will Emerge from Our Crisis," *Lilly Family School of Philanthropy*, October 2021, <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news/newsletter/philanthropy-matters/2021-issues/october-2021.html>.

76 Edgar Villanueva, "Decolonizing Wealth Project," *Decolonizing Wealth Project*, 2024, <https://decolonizingwealth.com/about/>.

77 Giving Tuesday, "Convening Social Sector Leaders to Navigate the Future of AI," 2024, <https://ai.givingtuesday.org/>.

78 Lucy Bernholz, "Philanthropy 2173: AI and the Social Sector," *Philanthropy 2173* (blog), November 9, 2023, <https://philanthropy.blogspot.com/2023/11/ai-and-social-sector.html>.

cause they offer no evidence of past (bedrock) success. Many foundations and funders have expressed exactly this goal in the 2020s, but may be still attached, like Pasic’s rubber band, to proven past processes that are hard to give up. Von Forester offers this approach of increasing odds of new information by making many more smaller grants to actors who have not been part of prior solutions. There are, of course, many ways to package this idea within the norms and operating principles of philanthropic organizations. Perhaps this is the very path MacKenzie Scott has started down. Her experimentation, freed from the burden of past successes that so many foundations carry, may indeed create some new ways of giving.

We acknowledge an inherent problem with the presumed value suggested by many more, smaller, riskier (by usual measures) grants that result in the fragmentation Stephen Goldberg describes in *Billions of Drops in Millions of Buckets: Why Philanthropy Doesn’t Advance Social Progress*. Noting that the average grants of the largest 100 foundations in 2009 were about \$50,000, he argues that “such grant sizes are simply too small to support the development of robust and enduring nonprofits capable of achieving scale and consequential social impact.”<sup>79</sup> The counter argument, however, is that such grants allow for greater experimentation with the possibility of finding hitherto unknown approaches to social problems that can have consequential impact and might have gone unknown. Smaller grants do not preclude subsequent larger grants, which themselves are “inherently risky” as Julia Stasch reminds us.<sup>80</sup>

Another of the paths opened by Von Forester’s critique is implied by applying cybernetics to philanthropic action through nonprofits—updated by the kind of question *Nonprofit Quarterly* editor Cindi Suarez asks in an essay on why civil society needs to pay attention to AI and the analysis of big data: “How do we, as social change agents, engage the growth of algorithms and artificial intelligence?”<sup>81</sup> The answer awaits the response of many others who know how algorithms are reshaping society and even becoming responsible for the creation of wealth, which can be used for transformative social action. Civil society broadly—and philanthropists specifically—can lead transformative change by “reappropriat[ing] this value to serve the common good”.<sup>82</sup> Some of the largest billionaire donors are, of course, innovators who have made their fortunes from technology and their ability to manipulate algorithms. Suarez’s question remains unanswered in 2024.

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79 Steven H. Goldberg, *Billions of Drops in Millions of Buckets: Why Philanthropy Doesn’t Advance Social Progress* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

80 Julia M. Stasch, “Taking Risk and Requiring Evidence,” *MacArthur Foundation*, January 6, 2017. <https://www.macfound.org/press/perspectives/taking-risk-and-requiring-evidence>.

81 Cyndi Suarez, “Why Civil Society Needs to Pay Attention to AI,” *Nonprofit Quarterly* (blog), July 15, 2021, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/civil-society-pay-attention-to-ai-2/>.

82 Von Foerster, “Giving with a Purpose”.

It would be disingenuous to end this essay without acknowledging that we asked ChatGPT for its own take on AI and philanthropy, and specifically cybernetics—which it reported had no widely known or accepted application to philanthropy. In offering extensive comments on what AI can do for both grantmakers and their recipients and on cybernetics, ChatGPT echoed many of the observations we have made: “By harnessing the power of AI, philanthropists can make data-driven decisions, maximize the impact of their donations, and contribute more effectively to positive social change. However, it’s important to note that ethical considerations, transparency, and a human-centered approach should guide the integration of AI in philanthropy”.<sup>83</sup> We leave any conclusion to be drawn from this essay to ChatGPT.

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83 OpenAI, “ChatGPT Response,” *How Is AI Helping Philanthropists’ Decisions on Giving?* 2024, <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

## Turning to Narrative: Generosity, Giving, and Gratitude in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*Quantitative approaches to the study of philanthropy often overshadow narrative approaches, especially in the professional literature. Quantitative approaches tend to speak in generalities and narrative approaches in particularities. When it comes to understanding why persons give and receive, narrative approaches have an edge. To illustrate this advantage, this article explores a single, especially thoughtful and beautiful act of generosity in perhaps the greatest novel ever written, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.*

Again, it is possible to fail in many ways (for bad belongs to the class of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to that of the limited), while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason also one is easy and the other difficult – to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult); for these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of failure, and the appropriate of excellence; for men are good in but one way, but bad in many.<sup>2</sup>

Natural though it may be that philanthropy should strive to adopt a data-driven approach to theory and practice, such a move carries with it inherent risks and costs. The costs include a tendency to deal with generosity, giving, and gratitude in aggregate, a turn from narrative, and likely, a loss of philanthropic inspiration. Evidence takes on a statistical form, leeching away the personal. In our quest to tell the story of everyone, or at least large groups of people, we lose the capacity to tell anyone's – that is, the narrative of any particular person. And while philanthropy's capacity to inform may appear to have been augmented, its capacity to move hearts and minds is typically diminished. There are limits to what figures, tables, and graphs can convey.

If philanthropy is to flourish, it needs stories – stories not instead of data, but stories in addition to data, and in many cases, stories in preference to

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1 Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

2 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 37, bk. 2, ch. 6, §14; Bekker 1106b.14.

data. The great faith traditions that form the foundation of contemporary philanthropy, including the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, present very little in the way of data sets, but they are chockfull of narratives – Abraham hosting the divine strangers immediately before he and his wife Sarah learn that – against all odds – they will soon become parents; Jesus’ parables of the rich fool, the good Samaritan, and the prodigal son; and the Prophet repeatedly giving money that he had planned to spend on himself to others in need.

One of the richest sources of philanthropic narrative is imaginative literature, and it is to great works of literature that we need to turn to appreciate fully the limitations of a purely data-driven approach to understanding philanthropy. For such methods necessarily leave out qualitative dimensions that come far nearer to the real, underlying purposes and consequences of generosity and gratitude. Data can represent the frequency and magnitude of acts of giving and receiving, but literature encompasses otherwise unaddressed features, such as the story behind a donor’s capacity to give, the motivation for doing so, and the lived consequences of acts of generosity for givers, receivers, and whole communities.

Quantitative approaches tend to speak in generalities, while qualitative ones emphasize particularity. Especially in literature, we get to know what individual human beings are like through characters – who they are, where they come from, and what they aspire to in life. In novels, we not only see them in action but frequently gain access to their inner thoughts and feelings, getting to know how they see the world and their place in it. We get to see their relationships up close and personal. And with this degree of intimacy, we can understand more deeply not only acts of giving and receiving but the development or erosion of human excellences such as generosity and gratitude – not only what people give, when, where, and how, but also why. Are they giving to save face or build a reputation, or because they genuinely care about the welfare and flourishing of the person or persons they are intending to help? What, in their view, constitutes giving and receiving at their best, and why?

If we are to begin to grasp the claims of a narrative approach to understanding philanthropy, we must be willing to immerse ourselves in the qualitative instead of the quantitative, the particular instead of the general, and the narrative instead of the scientific. This means setting aside the quest for impersonal principles and conclusions, and instead looking at the story of a person, a family, or a community. We must resist the temptation to say what is true always and everywhere, regardless of who is involved, and instead look at what is so for a particular person or group of people. And instead of focusing on just anyone at random, based on the presumption that everyone is largely the same as everyone else, we would do well to choose especially illuminating persons and relationships, as represented in great works of literature.

Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is considered perhaps the greatest of all novels. When the American novelist William Faulkner, winner of the 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature, was asked what he regarded as the three greatest novels in world literature, he responded, "Anna Karenina, Anna Karenina, and Anna Karenina." In 2010, Time Magazine surveyed 125 celebrated authors to compile its list of the 10 greatest books of all time, its list included works by but one author twice, Leo Tolstoy. Listed at number three was Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. And at number one, the best novel of all time, was *Anna Karenina*,<sup>3</sup> about which the novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote, "*Anna Karenina* is sheer perfection as a work of art. No European work of fiction of our present day comes anywhere near it."

Released serially between 1875 and 1877, *Anna Karenina* focuses primarily on three sets of relationships – the devoted mother Dolly and her philandering, spendthrift husband, Stiva; Anna, Stiva's sister, whose passions lead her to abandon her husband and son to take up with a rich young military officer, Vronsky; and Levin, a landowning farmer and his courtship, marriage, and family life with Dolly's younger sister, Kitty. For present purposes, let us focus on the first and third of these relationships. The novel opens with upheaval in the household of Dolly, who has just discovered a letter that implicates her husband in an extramarital affair with the former governess of their children, a fact which Stiva cannot deny.

Stiva is distressed at the situation, but not for the reasons we might expect. He repents not of the affair, but the fact that he allowed it to be discovered. In his mind, he is not really guilty in the matter, since he was merely following the dictates of his own nature. After all, how could he repent that "he, a handsome, amorous man of thirty-four, was not in love with his wife, the mother of five living and two dead children?" How could she possibly begrudge him such a dalliance, since she, "a worn-out, aging, no longer beautiful woman who was in no way remarkable," could no longer inflame or satisfy his passions? Surely, he thinks, she, "the simple, merely good-natured mother of his family, ought to have indulged him, simply out of fairness."

Stiva makes for a poor shepherd. He repeatedly fails at stewarding what he has – his family, his career, and his money. His heart simply isn't in it. He feels no sense of ownership, at least not a consistent and enduring one. To be sure, when he is at home, he is able at least to recall, if not to take sufficiently seriously, that he is a husband and father. But when he steps out the front door and into the world, he thinks like a bachelor, not only open to, but eager for the charms of other women. Likewise, he thinks of his property, most of which

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3 Lev Grossman and Rebecca Myers, "Top 10 Romantic Books," *Time*, February 14, 2007, <https://entertainment.time.com/2007/02/14/top-10-romantic-books/slide/anna-karenina-by-leo-tolstoy/#:~:text=By%20Lev%20Grossman%20and%20Rebecca%20Myers%20May%202013.>

originated in his wife's dowry, as a resource to be expended for his own pleasure. Out on the town, he spends and tips extravagantly, while his wife lacks funds to buy winter coats for their children.

The turmoil in Stiva and Dolly's household extends beyond the discovery of his marital infidelity to his financial faithlessness. He has dug such a deep hole of debt for himself that his only apparent means of extricating himself is the sale of one of his wife's properties, a forest – a sale that he means to complete as quickly as possible, completely ignoring any concern to obtain a fair price. As a result, all hope for marital reconciliation is inextricably bound up with the need to obtain his wife's approval for the sale.

The wood was to be sold; but now, until he and his wife were reconciled, there could be no question of this. Even more unpleasant here was the fact that this interjected his financial interest in the pending transaction into the reconciliation with his wife. The thought that he might be guided by this interest, that for the sake of selling this wood he might seek reconciliation with his wife – the very idea was offensive.<sup>4</sup>

The problem is not that Stiva has dug himself a pit into which, after he manages to extricate himself, he will never again fall. To the contrary, both his wandering eye and his profligacy will continue unabated, precisely because he refuses to take responsibility for them. He is fond of saying that it is not his will but his neurons that direct his behavior. Even after Stiva is reconciled with his wife, with the assistance of Anna, who will soon become ensnared in her own extramarital affair, he will continue to seek out the company of pretty young women. Likewise, even if some windfall erases his debts, he will simply carry on living beyond his means, soon burying himself all over again in debt. He is the life of every party he attends, but it is inevitable that he will mire his family in penury.

Levin represents a stark contrast. Since childhood, when he lost both his parents, he has longed to be part of a family. He thinks of finding a wife not as an end in itself but as a means to create a family. He falls in love at first not so much with Kitty, but her whole family and their kind of existence, for which he longs passionately. For Levin, it would be impossible to have a wife and children and yet engage in infidelities, since what he aspires to most of all is a loving family. To him, the idea of keeping a mistress is not only repulsive but incomprehensible, a betrayal of what he cares most about in life. Unlike Stiva, he is awkward, even amusing to some in high society, but the sanctity of the family is something it never occurs to him to question.

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4 Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 166.

When Stiva later visits Levin in the countryside, he is not paying a purely social call. He is also there to sell the forest. Levin is irritated, not just that Stiva has mired himself so deeply in debt that such a transaction is necessary, but also that he so carelessly negotiates the terms of the transaction. Levin knows that the forest is worth several times what Stiva is selling it for—he hunts there every year. When the greedy merchant who aims to purchase it complains that the price is still too high, a frustrated Levin intervenes, offering to buy the property himself and thereby quickly bringing the negotiations to a close. To Levin, the forest is a beautiful part of a family’s heritage. To the merchant, it represents mere lumber. And to Stiva, it is nothing but a ready source of cash.

Stiva’s profligacy imposes constraints on his family that he is unwilling to contemplate. Soon after the sale of the forest, he goes to Petersburg. His purpose in doing so is partly professional, though not in the way we might suppose. He goes there not to get work done but simply to “remind the ministry of his existence,” a visit necessary to maintain his employment. While he is there, he “takes nearly all the money from the house,” then spends his time “cheerfully and pleasantly at the races and various dachas,” amusing himself in the usual ways. Meanwhile, Dolly and the children move to the country, “in order to reduce expenses to the bare minimum.” Ironically, they stay in a village near the forest that Stiva recently sold.

Stiva had visited the property before them, to prepare it for their arrival. In fact, however, his efforts were doomed from the start, for “however hard he tried to be a concerned father and husband, he could never remember that he had a wife and children.” His bachelor tastes prevented him from seeing the property from the point of view of his family, and as a result he ends up focusing his attention on decorations that resemble a bachelor pad, as opposed to necessities and conveniences for a mother and children. When Dolly arrives, the place is so poorly readied and in such a state of disrepair that she slips into despair. Only the efforts of a member of the household, who makes friends with the locals, rescue the family from their truly desperate situation.

Yet Dolly also experiences moments of joy. With now six children, she has many worries, yet these same worries – about the children’s illnesses, their needs, and occasional signs of bad character – also constitute her “sole possible happiness.” They distract her from thoughts of her husband, who does not love her. And the children themselves provide her many things to rejoice in. These joys were so small “they passed unnoticed, like gold in sand, and in bad moments, she saw only the sorrows, only the sand.” But there were good moments, too, “when she saw only the joys, only the gold.” Dolly might seem to some readers a doormat who lets her wayward and irresponsible husband walk all over her, yet in her devotion to and capacity to revel in her children, she is in fact one of the novel’s most admirable characters.

To be able to see what Dolly sees, hear what Dolly hears, notice what Dolly notices, feel what Dolly feels, and enter into Dolly's joys is one of the most praiseworthy things that could be said about anyone. She truly loves her children with all her heart, and anyone who sympathizes with her must possess a similar capacity. And such a person is Levin. When he comes to visit her and the children, she is especially glad, because now he will see her "in all her glory." "No one," we are told, "could understand her grandeur and what it consisted in better than Levin." And she is right, for when he beholds them, he – a man who has longed for nothing in life more than a family – sees "one of the pictures of family life he imagined for himself in the future."

Yet there is also an awkwardness in Levin's visit, for he senses that his offers to help improve the family's situation might be embarrassing, a surmise in which he is correct. Dolly does indeed find it unpleasant "to find help coming from an outsider in a matter that ought to have been taken care of by her husband." She is ashamed and resentful of her husband's irresponsibility, "foisting his family affairs on others." Dolly and Levin are on the same page – Levin knows that Dolly is embarrassed, and she knows that he knows this. She "loved him for this subtlety of understanding, this delicacy." In fact, they love one another, not in an illicit way, but out of genuine admiration for what is best in each of them.

Here we see one of the most crucial features of effective philanthropy, at least in the universe of *Anna Karenina*. Levin can see that help is needed. He truly wants to be of service. But he also knows that it is not enough merely to provide what is needed. No less important than what he provides is how he provides it, in a way that does not draw attention to the family's unnatural situation or his own magnanimity in coming to their aid. He recognizes that Dolly and the children are not just mouths to be fed or heads to be covered, but persons possessed of their own dignity, who can be harmed, at least emotionally, by a failure to recognize the delicacy of their situation. Levin is able to care well for them because he knows them and loves them.

It comes as no surprise that, later in the novel, Stiva's recklessness has once again landed his family in desperate circumstances. By now, Levin and Kitty have married, and Kitty is deeply concerned with her sister's plight. "Do you know that Dolly's situation is becoming absolutely impossible?" she asks him. "She is in debt all around, and she has no money." Kitty intends to ask her other brother-in-law and Levin to confront Stiva about the matter, to convince him to turn over a new leaf. But Stiva has not changed, and there is reason to think that he will never change. Thinking first of the future, his family, and his own responsibilities as husband and father are simply not in his nature.

Yet Stiva is troubled by the situation and growing desperate. "Two-thirds of the money from the forest had already been spent, and he had borrowed all the remaining third from the merchant at a discount of ten percent." The merchant

refused to lend him anymore, and for the first time, Dolly had begun asserting her rights to her own property, “refusing to sign the contract in receipt of the money for the final third of the wood.” Stiva has his salary, but all of it goes for household expenses and paying off his “petty, never-ending debts.” There is no money, but he does not know what to do. All he can think of is to cajole and pressure his wife to sell off more of her property, which we realize by now would only delay the inevitable.

Instead of attempting to reform himself, which never even occurs to him, Stiva resolves to seek another position by which to add to his income. He does not care what ministry or business this position might be in. He has no true career, profession, or calling, and regards his work simply as a means of making money. He has no real work, in the sense of a craft or service to which he applies himself as a way of contributing to the lives of others. He is, in the truest sense of the word, a mere playboy, who lives for life outside of family and work, outside of all responsibility, where he can simply indulge his passions. He simply needs more money to maintain himself in the style of life to which he has become accustomed.

The contrast between Stiva and Levin is stark, and it is especially clearly revealed by the city in which each feels most comfortable. Stiva despises Moscow, a place where, if he spends too much time, he begins to worry about his wife’s reproaches, the health and education of his children, and his debts. In Petersburg, by contrast, he forgets such cares, spending his time with people who “really live and do not stagnate.” By contrast, when Levin is in Petersburg, he finds himself frittering away his time and money, feeling increasingly empty and frustrated. In Moscow, the home to Kitty’s family, by contrast, he at least stands a chance of remaining himself, although he ultimately thrives only in the countryside, on his estate.

Having been married long enough to bear and begin raising a child with Levin, Kitty ponders her husband’s nature. On the one hand, he is tormented by a lack of faith, and she knows that if someone asked her whether his failure to believe would damn him, she would have to say yes. Yet she also knows that she loves him more than anything on earth, and she finds his struggles with faith amusing. She can be amused because she knows that her husband is a good man. She does not need to weigh in her mind the various doctrines of the faith and Levin’s positions on each one. She merely needs to reflect on a recent example of his goodness, the way he puts others before himself.

Two weeks prior, a letter from Stiva had reached Dolly. In it, he begged her to “save his honor and sell her estate to pay his debts.” Dolly is in despair. She detests her husband, but she also pities him, and resolves that her only option is to divorce him. It is here that Kitty smiles, recalling Levin’s consternation, how he kept returning to the matter over and over again, and how he eventually comes up with a solution that spares the feeling and dignity of all con-

cerned, yet resolves the financial difficulties of the family. His creative resolution is conveyed in but a clause in a rather long sentence, yet it constitutes one of the truly thoughtful and beautiful examples of generosity in world literature.

Kitty recalls how Dolly, having finally rejected divorce, agreed to sell part of her estate. Yet Levin knows there is something wrong with this, that it meets Stiva's needs but puts Dolly in an untenable situation, creating an unbreachable rift in an already fractured relationship.

After that, Kitty, with an involuntary smile of emotion, recalled her husband's consternation, his frequent approaches to the matter that preoccupied him, and how at last, having come up with the one and only means of helping Dolly without insulting her, he suggested to Kitty that she give Dolly her part of the estate, something she had never thought of before.<sup>5</sup>

Kitty knows her husband less through what he writes or says, about which doubts frequently torment him, than by what he does – not by his mind but through his heart. “What kind of a nonbeliever is he?” she asks. “Everything for others, and nothing for himself.” He is and has always been the steward for others, “and now Dolly and her children are under his wing.” It is not in Levin's inability to complete the definitive book on Russian agriculture that his true character is revealed, but in the way he takes on responsibility for others who need his help, making their troubles in some sense his own. It is not in his means of making money, indulging his passions, or questing for fame or power that Levin distinguishes himself, but in his deep generosity and his sincerity in giving the very best he has to offer.

Thinking of their newborn son, Kitty has but one wish for him. “Yes, only be a man like your father, only a man like that,” she murmurs. Levin is not the richest, most powerful, most dashing, or most famous man in the novel, but he is surely the most generous. His fundamental orientation is not one of exploiting others but contributing to them. He aims to lead a life of significance, not puffing himself up larger and larger but serving others. Even his property is something he protects not so much for himself but for his family, which he envisions not only in terms of those now living but also those yet to come. He leads a life of responsibility to something larger than himself, and as such he represents one of literature's great portraits of a truly philanthropic human being.

To those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to know, and hearts to feel, the narratives of generosity, giving, and gratitude in Tolstoy's *Anna*

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5 Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 360.

*Karenina* illuminate dimensions of philanthropy – meaning, goodness, and beauty – that no chart, table, or graph could ever begin to represent. To be sure, such narratives operate on a much smaller scale and therefore limit our capacity to make macroscopic declarations about whole populations and societies. Yet because they draw our attention to real flesh-and-blood human beings, as opposed to impersonal aggregates, they also reveal what philanthropy can and does mean in daily life, the only context in which any human being ever really gives or receives. An education or career that focused exclusively on philanthropy’s literary dimensions would omit too much, but one that failed to accord them their due would not qualify as truly philanthropic in the first place.

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## Across Continents and Generations: A Legacy of Promethean Philanthropy

### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the transformative power of “Promethean philanthropy” through the interconnected narratives of William Van Til, an American educator in 1960s Iran, and a young Afghan scholar displaced by war in the 2020s. Drawing on Van Til’s diary entries and the experiences of the Afghan scholar, the research explores the challenges and triumphs of cross-cultural educational development. It examines how Van Til’s dedication to education, akin to the mythological titan Prometheus’s gift of fire, laid the groundwork for future educators and transcended generational and geographical boundaries. The study highlights the enduring impact of mentorship, the resilience of the human spirit, and the critical role of education in fostering intellectual growth and bridging cultural divides. By weaving together these narratives, the paper underscores the timeless value of knowledge-sharing in shaping destinies and forging connections across diverse societies.*

### INTRODUCTION

The mythological titan Prometheus defied the gods to bring fire, and with it, knowledge, to humanity. His act sparked a fire that continues to burn brightly, inspiring generations to share their expertise and foster intellectual growth across cultures and continents. This spirit of “Promethean philanthropy” weaves a narrative that connects William Van Til, an American educator in the early 1960s, to a young scholar from Afghanistan displaced by war in the early 2020s.

The essence of Prometheus’s gift lies not just in the act of giving but in the transformative power of knowledge to bridge gaps and ignite progress across diverse societies. This narrative highlights how a single spark of wisdom can illuminate countless lives and transcend boundaries, creating an enduring legacy. The positive impact of sharing knowledge can be seen in how it encourages new ideas, empowers marginalized communities, and fosters a global sense of interconnectedness and mutual growth. Prometheus’s defiance thus symbolizes the courage to challenge the status quo and ignite intellectual curiosity that transcends generational and geographical confines.

William Van Til, like Prometheus, embarked on a transformative journey, documented in captivating diary entries. His mission echoed the Titan’s

act—to offer his expertise as an advisor (a neologism we coin to represent the overlap of visitation and advising), nurturing the burgeoning education system in Iran. He could not have known that his son, Jon Van Til, would decades later become a key figure in a similar story, albeit under far more harrowing circumstances. William's dedication to education was not just a professional endeavor; it was a deeply personal commitment to the belief that education is a universal right. His work in Iran laid the groundwork for future educators and highlighted the critical role of cultural exchange in educational development. His diary entries provide a window into the challenges he faced, from cultural barriers to political tensions, and his unwavering resolve to make a positive impact. These experiences underscored the importance of perseverance, empathy, and adaptability in the face of adversity, themes that continue to resonate in today's global educational landscape. By documenting his journey, William Van Til not only chronicled his own experiences but also left a legacy that would inspire and guide future educators.

Fast forward to 2019. The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan forced a scholar brimming with potential to flee his homeland. Seeking refuge and the opportunity to continue his academic pursuits, he landed at Marmara University in Turkey. It was there, amidst the bustling halls of academia, that his path intersected with the legacy of William Van Til. Jon Van Til, now a professor emeritus himself, was on a Fulbright assignment at Marmara. Meeting at a session designed to introduce doctoral students to the advisor, they forged an unlikely connection—a son witnessing the fruits of his father's Promethean efforts, and a young scholar displaced by war, desperately seeking the very knowledge William Van Til had striven to impart. This meeting was more than serendipity; it was a testament to the enduring nature of educational mentorship and the bonds it can create across time and geography. The young scholar's determination to continue his studies despite the upheaval reflects the resilience and tenacity of scholars worldwide who face similar challenges. This encounter also underscores the profound impact that mentorship and educational support can have, offering hope and direction to those navigating the tumultuous waters of displacement and uncertainty.

In this study, we will explore the captivating narratives of both William Van Til and the young Afghan scholar (whose identity we shall not reveal for reasons that will become clear as our narrative unfolds). William Van Til's diary entries (selections presented in the Appendix to this paper) offer a unique perspective on the challenges and rewards of cross-cultural advisitation in early 1960s Iran. The Afghan scholar's story, on the other hand, sheds light on the devastating impact of political upheaval on education and the enduring quest for knowledge even in the face of immense adversity. The narrative takes a further turn in 2021, showcasing the transformative power of mentorship across generations.

By weaving these stories together, we explore the enduring legacy of William Van Til's Promethean philanthropy and its profound impact on the lives of educators and students across the globe. This exploration underscores the resilience of the human spirit and the indomitable drive to learn and teach, even amidst the most challenging circumstances. It is a celebration of the power of education to transcend barriers and the relentless pursuit of enlightenment in a world fraught with turmoil. The paper ultimately aims to highlight the timeless value of knowledge-sharing and the way it can shape destinies, forge connections, and build bridges across divides.

### WILLIAM VAN TIL'S ODYSSEY: A CASE STUDY IN CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

William Van Til's story, as captured in his diary entries, offers a captivating glimpse into the complexities of cross-cultural educational development. In 1962, at the age of 51, this seasoned professor of education at New York University embarked on a challenging yet rewarding journey to Iran. Van Til, a curriculum specialist for American secondary schools, grappled with a "complex mixture of emotions" – a blend of excitement, trepidation, and the inevitable discomfort of leaving the familiar behind. His internal struggle, documented in his diary, reflects the universal human experience of venturing into the unknown, a sentiment that resonates with readers from any background.

Van Til's Iranian odyssey was not without its hurdles. Cultural barriers loomed large. Unfamiliar customs, language differences necessitating interpreters, and contrasting social norms, particularly regarding gender roles, presented a steep learning curve. He describes, for instance, his initial struggles navigating social interactions, highlighting the importance of nonverbal communication and cultural sensitivity in fostering trust and rapport. The educational landscape itself held its own set of challenges. Rural schools often lacked resources and infrastructure, while established educational practices created a current of resistance to change. His diary entries detail specific examples of these challenges, such as encountering outdated textbooks or overcrowded classrooms, providing valuable insights into the practical hurdles faced by educators in developing nations. William Van Til's frustration mounted as he encountered officials who prioritized appearances over practical solutions for improvement. He recounts instances where bureaucratic hurdles impeded progress, underscoring the need for streamlined processes and a focus on measurable outcomes in educational reform.

Yet, amidst these obstacles, triumphs emerged. William Van Til's immersion in Iranian culture fostered a deeper understanding of the nation's unique educational needs. He witnessed firsthand the remarkable dedication and resilience of Iranian educators, especially those serving in remote areas. His diary entries are filled with instances that illuminate the efforts of teachers

who were visited, observed, and interviewed; dedicated individuals who often went above and beyond to ensure their students received a quality education despite limited resources. This exposure allowed him to identify areas ripe for improvement within the Iranian education system. By documenting specific examples of effective teaching practices observed in rural schools, William Van Til offered valuable suggestions for replicating these successes across the country.

### THE ENDURING VALUE OF WILLIAM VAN TIL'S DIARY ENTRIES

The richness of William Van Til's diary entries extends far beyond a personal chronicle of his experiences. They offer a multifaceted resource with enduring value for historians, educators, and anyone interested in cross-cultural understanding. His report provides:

1. **A Window into History:** Van Til's entries serve as a primary source, meticulously documenting a specific period in Iranian education history. They offer a unique snapshot of the educational landscape during the 1960s, capturing details of curriculum, resources, and prevailing practices. These firsthand accounts provide invaluable insights for historians studying the evolution of Iranian education and its place within the broader context of the nation's development.
2. **A Fostering of Cross-Cultural Empathy:** Van Til's diary acts as a bridge between cultures. By sharing his own struggles and triumphs navigating unfamiliar customs, language barriers, and social norms, he equips readers with the tools to approach cross-cultural interactions with greater sensitivity and understanding. His experiences highlight the importance of nonverbal communication, cultural awareness, and building trust in fostering collaboration across cultures.
3. **A Guide for Educators:** The reflective nature of Van Til's diary entries offers a valuable resource for educators venturing into unfamiliar territory. He doesn't shy away from sharing his frustrations with bureaucratic hurdles or outdated practices. However, he also celebrates the dedication and resilience of Iranian educators, particularly those serving in remote areas. By documenting specific examples of effective teaching practices and areas ripe for improvement, Van Til provides educators with a blueprint for navigating the challenges and rewards of cross-cultural educational development.

William Van Til's visit to Iran in the early 1960s underscores his commitment to advancing modern education in disadvantaged societies. His efforts during this period align with transformational philanthropy, emphasizing the creation of lasting social change. Van Til's approaches reflect the principles of

effective altruism and social capital theory, demonstrating how philanthropic actions can foster community development and social cohesion.<sup>1</sup> His work highlights the importance of innovative strategies in building networks and trust, which are crucial for societal progress. By focusing on modernizing education, Van Til aimed to address systemic inequalities and empower disadvantaged communities with the tools needed for self-sustained growth. His mission embodies the Promethean spirit—marked by innovation and the quest for progress—paralleling the efforts of many contemporary nonprofit, voluntary, and governmental organizations to similarly address complex social issues by pushing the boundaries of traditional service, philanthropy, and governance.<sup>2</sup>

Van Til's introduction of modern educational practices in Iran serves as a prime example of how the Promethean spirit can drive meaningful social change and tackle educational inequalities. Analyzing his impact through legacy theory and transformative learning theory reveals how his initiatives align with John Dewey's vision of education as a means for social progress and democratic renewal.<sup>3</sup> His approach provided new learning opportunities that addressed contemporary challenges and aimed to foster long-term societal benefits. By integrating modern methodologies and educational practices, Van Til sought to bridge gaps in the existing system and promote greater equity in educational access. His work illustrates the power of educational philanthropy as a tool for social transformation and highlights the potential for such initiatives to inspire broader systemic change.

Examining the intersections of philanthropy, Promethean themes, and educational legacies in Van Til's work uncovers underexplored areas in existing scholarship. His efforts to introduce modern education in Iran highlight the adaptability of philanthropic strategies in diverse cultural contexts. The innovative approaches he employed offer valuable insights into overcoming educational barriers and promoting equitable opportunities. As Brest and Harvey note, "effective philanthropy is not about giving away money; it's about making a difference," which underscores the importance of thoughtful engagement in philanthropic efforts.<sup>4</sup> By focusing on disadvantaged communities, Van Til's work demonstrated how tailored philanthropic strategies could address specific regional needs while contributing to broader educational reform. This exam-

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1 Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save: How to Play Your Part in Ending World Poverty* (New York: Pan Macmillan, 2010).

2 Cf. William Van Til, *The Role of the Educator in Developing Nations* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1988); Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (New York: Vintage, 2019).

3 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

4 Paul Brest and Hal Harvey, *Money Well Spent: A Strategic Plan for Smart Philanthropy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 45.

ination also sheds light on the long-term impact and relevance of such initiatives within different sociopolitical frameworks.

Soon after Van Til's visit, Iran embarked on a wave of educational reforms under the Shah in the 1960s and 70s, reflecting a continued effort to modernize the country. These reforms included significant investments in education and infrastructure, which aimed to bring about social and economic progress. However, this modernization trend faced a dramatic shift with the Islamic Revolution of 1978, which halted many of these reforms and led to a period of substantial upheaval. Despite the challenges and changes, the principles of Promethean philanthropy that Van Til advocated continued to resonate in discussions about educational and social progress in the region. Although the immediate impact of his visit was limited, the foundational ideas and values he introduced contributed to a broader context of educational advancement and reform, influencing ongoing conversations about the role of modern education in societal development.

### DEFYING PERIL: THE UNWAVERING PURSUIT OF EDUCATION BY AN AFGHAN SCHOLAR

The narrative of an Afghan scholar's relentless pursuit of education amid adversity embodies another aspect of Promethean philanthropy, where the quest for knowledge and enlightenment defies peril and hardship. Following the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan embarked on a transformative journey marked by significant advancements in education, human rights, and civil society. This period of renewal, bolstered by international aid, symbolized hope and progress, especially for Afghan women and girls who gained access to education after years of denial. Central to this transformation was the evolution of civil society, which emerged as a resilient force against the resurgence of the Taliban. Jon Van Til's theory of the third sector elucidates the role of civil society organizations as dynamic entities navigating the space between the governmental and business sectors, fostering community development and social cohesion.<sup>5</sup> Against this backdrop, a young graduate from Herat's Faculty of Law and Political Science emerged, driven by a deep-seated desire to contribute to his nation's reconstruction.

In the northwest part of Afghanistan, in the city of Herat, among immigrant returnees from neighboring countries, this young Afghan graduate harbored dreams of contributing to his nation's rebuilding. This aspiration was nurtured by a group of Herat University visiting scholars, including his father, who returned from a U.S. government-funded visiting program. They pioneered the country's first legal clinic, inspired by American law schools

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5 Jon Van Til, *Growing Civil Society: From Nonprofit Sector to Third Space* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

but tailored to Afghan rules and styles. This legal clinic not only served as a center for young Afghan students to practice law but also functioned as a bridge connecting traditional institutions to the modern university system through its street law program. The young Afghan's achievements at Herat University's Faculty of Law and Political Science drew the attention of the Legal Education Support Program for Afghanistan (LESPA), an initiative at the University of Washington School of Law. LESPA awarded scholarships to Afghan law school professors to pursue degrees at the University of Washington School of Law. Upon his graduation, he returned to Herat to continue teaching, driven by his commitment despite knowing the significant security risks and the challenges that awaited him.

Indeed, teaching at Herat University proved to be fraught with challenges, as he faced multiple threats from insurgent groups due to his teachings on democracy, human rights, and women's rights—topics fiercely opposed by extremist groups. Despite the perilous environment, his commitment to education and justice remained steadfast. His dedication was recognized with a Ph.D. scholarship from Marmara University, which not only offered an opportunity for advanced study but also served as a crucial refuge from the immediate dangers he faced in Afghanistan. While in Istanbul, he met Jon Van Til, whose legacy of Promethean philanthropy became instrumental in his journey. Van Til's commitment to education and his support for scholars in peril helped facilitate the scholar's escape from Afghanistan when the Taliban returned to power in 2021. Now a visiting scholar at Rutgers University, he continues to navigate numerous challenges. His family remains in Afghanistan, and he must protect his identity and engage in self-censorship. Despite these difficulties, he upholds the legacy of Promethean philanthropy by teaching students at Rutgers-Camden, writing papers on civil society and peace in Afghanistan, and offering online courses for Afghan girls. Though life in exile is demanding, his resolve to advance education and advocacy remains unwavering, reflecting the enduring impact of Van Til's philanthropic legacy.

The scholar's journey can be understood through the concept of Promethean Philanthropy, a theme Marty Sulek explores in his dissertation, *Gifts of Fire*. Sulek interprets the Promethean myth as symbolizing not only the gift of knowledge but also the ongoing responsibility to use that knowledge to improve humanity.<sup>6</sup> This interpretation aligns closely with the scholar's experiences. The Afghan scholar's efforts to enhance his English skills, study abroad, and return to Afghanistan to contribute to reconstruction reflect this Promethean ideal. His work at the legal clinic, which bridges traditional insti-

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6 Marty Sulek, "Gifts of Fire: An Historical Analysis of the Promethean Myth for the Light It Casts Upon the Philosophical Philanthropy of Protagoras, Socrates, and Plato; and Prolegomena to Consideration of the Same in Bacon and Nietzsche" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2011).

tutions with modern education, embodies the act of bringing enlightenment to challenging circumstances. Despite facing numerous threats and obstacles, his dedication to teaching and advancing social justice illustrates the core of philosophical philanthropy as described by Sulek.<sup>7</sup>

### FROM IRAN TO AFGHANISTAN: THE ENDURING INFLUENCE OF VAN TIL'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

William Van Til's work in Iran and the Afghan scholar's journey share a common thread: the belief in the transformative power of education. Just as Prometheus brought fire to humanity, illuminating the path to progress, both Van Til and the Afghan scholar brought knowledge and enlightenment to societies in need. It is an enduring legacy of Prometheus that with the gift of knowledge there come stern expectations for moral responsibility. Van Til's work faced significant challenges, including resistance from traditionalists and political instability, much like the Afghan scholar's struggles with insurgent threats. Yet, both persisted in their missions, driven by a commitment to fostering social justice and educational advancement. The Afghan scholar's eventual move to Marmara University, where he would meet Jon Van Til, symbolizes the continuation of this legacy of Promethean philanthropy across generations and continents.

Iran, the birthplace of Zoroastrianism, and Afghanistan, home to the legendary cave where Prometheus was said to have been chained, are steeped in historical and mythological significance. William Van Til's journey to Iran in the 1960s aligns him with the Promethean archetype, embodying the mission of bringing new teachings to a foreign land. Zoroaster, the Promethean fire-priest turned prophet, introduced the concept of monotheism, a transformative idea that reshaped spiritual beliefs. Similarly, Van Til's work aimed to revolutionize the educational landscape in Iran, introducing modern practices and ideas to a system resistant to change. His dedication to educational philanthropy mirrors Prometheus's gift of fire—an enduring symbol of enlightenment and progress. This Promethean spirit is evident in Van Til's efforts to bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding through education, a mission fraught with challenges but driven by a vision of lasting societal improvement.

The attempts at modernization in both Iran and Afghanistan have faced significant setbacks, leading to periods of extremism and authoritarian rule. Van Til's experiences in Iran during the 1960s and the subsequent reforms under the Shah highlight the challenges of implementing educational changes in

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7 Marty Sulek, "Recovering the Original Meaning of Philanthropy: A Prelude to Consideration of the Philanthropy of Faculty Work," in *Faculty Work and the Public Good: Philanthropy, Engagement, and Academic Professionalism*, ed. G. G. Shaker (New York: Teachers College Press, 2015), 31–43.

a traditional society. These efforts were dramatically interrupted by the Islamic Revolution in 1978, which halted many of the progressive reforms. Similarly, Afghanistan's post-Taliban era saw a surge in educational and social advancements, only to be disrupted by the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Civil society in both countries has played a crucial role in resisting authoritarianism, exemplified by movements like "Women, Life, Freedom" in Iran and "Bread, Work, and Freedom" in Afghanistan. These movements underscore the resilience of civil society in advocating for human rights and social justice, despite the oppressive regimes they confront.<sup>8</sup>

The journey of an Afghan scholar, shaped by the transformative power of education, mirrors and extends the narrative begun by Van Til. This scholar, having benefited from educational opportunities in Afghanistan, represents the fruition of such educational initiatives in the region. Despite facing threats from insurgent groups due to teachings on democracy and human rights, the scholar's dedication to education remained steadfast. This commitment is evident in the pursuit of advanced studies abroad and the subsequent return to Afghanistan to contribute to the nation's rebuilding efforts. The scholar's experiences reflect a reciprocal relationship where the seeds of educational reform planted by William Van Til have borne fruit in subsequent generations of scholars. This ongoing struggle and commitment to education and social justice transcend borders and generations, highlighting the enduring impact of Promethean philanthropy.

In both Iran and Afghanistan, civil society has emerged as a formidable force in shaping resistance against authoritarian regimes. Van Til's observations of the dedication of Iranian educators during his visit highlight the foundational role of civil society in fostering resilience and promoting progressive ideals. This tradition continues in contemporary Iran with the "Green Movement," where civil society played a pivotal role in protesting the 2009 election results, demanding greater political freedom and transparency. Similarly, in Afghanistan, where the Taliban now control the country, civil society has been a main driving force against their oppressive policies, particularly those targeting the rights of women and girls. These movements illustrate the enduring power of civil society to mobilize and inspire change, even in the face of significant obstacles.

The legacy of educational philanthropy, as embodied by William Van Til and continued by subsequent scholars, underscores the transformative power of education in promoting social change. Van Til's introduction of modern educational practices in Iran and the ongoing efforts to support Afghan education

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8 Sahar Fetrat, "Bread, Work, Freedom—Afghan Women's Two Years of Resistance," *Human Rights Watch*, August 16, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/16/bread-work-freedom-afghan-womens-two-years-resistance>.

highlight the critical role of education in addressing systemic inequalities and empowering disadvantaged communities. By bridging traditional and modern educational approaches, Van Til and these scholars demonstrate how tailored philanthropic strategies can effectively address regional needs and contribute to broader educational reforms. Their work exemplifies the Promethean spirit of bringing enlightenment and progress to societies facing significant challenges, underscoring the enduring impact of educational philanthropy in fostering social transformation.<sup>9</sup>

## ADVANCING EDUCATION THROUGH ADVISITATION: THE IMPACT OF WILLIAM VAN TIL'S LEGACY

This section explores the concept of advisitation through the lens of William Van Til's 1962 sojourn in Iran. A distinguished figure in American education, Van Til dedicated his life to advancing educational practices and principles. Renowned for his innovative work in secondary school curriculum development, he had established himself as a leading academic by the age of 51. His deep-rooted commitment to education as a catalyst for social change was evident in his prolific career at New York University, where he played a central role in shaping educational practices. Van Til's belief in education as a transformative force resonates with the philosophical insights of Protagoras, the chief harbinger of the Greek Enlightenment in classical Athens.<sup>10</sup> Sulek emphasizes the role of wisdom and human understanding in fostering societal improvement, aligning with Van Til's conviction that education can bridge cultural divides and enhance the human experience. By contextualizing Van Til's contributions within this framework, we can better understand how his lifelong dedication to education informs ongoing discussions about its significance and capacity to effect social change.

## THE JOURNEY TO IRAN

In 1962, an unanticipated opportunity arose when Van Til was invited to join a small team dispatched by the Agency for International Development (AID) to assess Iran's educational landscape.<sup>11</sup> Although he had never visited the country and lacked prior expertise in its study, he embraced the challenge with a blend of professional curiosity and personal trepidation. Van Til confessed to having struggled against "forebodings of personal disaster," an indica-

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9 Sulek, *Gifts of Fire*.

10 Marty Sulek, "Recovering the Wisdom of Protagoras: A Reinterpretation of the Prometheia Trilogy," in *A New Politics for Philosophy: Essays on Plato, Nietzsche, and Strauss*, ed. James Dunn and Peter Telli (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022), 123–56.

11 William Van Til, *Iran All the Way: The 1962 Diary of an Advisor*, ed. Jon Van Til, edited version by Roy VT (May 14, 2024), Appendix A.

tion of the inner turmoil he faced as he embarked on this daunting mission.<sup>12</sup> This 50-day mission marked a significant chapter in his career, fueled by his lifelong dedication to improving educational systems and a spirit of adventure. His journey eastward to the remote corners of Iran—where it borders Afghanistan and Pakistan—became more than just a geographical voyage; it was a profound exploration into the socio-political complexities of educational reform. Van Til reflected on this journey, noting that “the road to Zahedan is a story of some experiences on the trip East in Iran to the corner of the world where Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan join”.<sup>13</sup>

Van Til’s experiences in Iran provided him with profound insights into the complexities of educational reform in a rapidly changing socio-political environment. The poverty he observed left a lasting impact on him, as he remarked that “the poverty-stricken children of the villages couldn’t conceive of such foods and living” as he was accustomed to.<sup>14</sup> His observations and interactions during this period not only enriched his understanding of global education issues but also deepened his appreciation for the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in educational development. This mission underscored the vital role of international collaboration in addressing educational challenges and highlighted the interconnectedness of educational practices across different contexts.

Van Til’s engagement within a foreign culture presented numerous challenges, particularly as he navigated the complexities of a new environment and the linguistic barriers inherent in cross-cultural communication. He described his accommodations as “barracks dormitory,” a stark contrast to the comforts of home.<sup>15</sup> Despite the initial uncertainty, he found solace and purpose in journaling. His daily reflections, meticulously documented in letters to his family, served as a valuable tool for processing his experiences. These letters, which would later be compiled into a 91-page manuscript edited by his son Jon Van Til, captured both the triumphs and tribulations of his advisitation, providing a vivid portrayal of life in Iran.

## EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN IRAN

The power of education as a dynamic force to bring social change has captivated scholars and practitioners for centuries, and understanding the Iranian educational context was a foundational aspect of Van Til’s cross-cultural educational efforts. The modernization of Iran’s education system, influenced significantly by the interplay between the Shi’ite clerics and the middle class, pre-

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12 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 5.

13 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 5.

14 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 2.

15 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 2.

sented unique challenges and opportunities.<sup>16</sup> Van Til's diary notes reveal his deep reflections on these complexities. For example, he observed the tension between traditional Islamic education and the introduction of Western-style curricula.<sup>17</sup> This observation highlights the challenges of balancing cultural preservation with modernization in the educational system. Additionally, Van Til's encounters with Iranian educators and students revealed the deep-rooted respect for authority and hierarchy within the educational system. These observations underscore the importance of understanding the cultural context in order to effectively engage with Iranian educators and students.

Overcoming cultural barriers was another significant challenge in Van Til's work. The Iranian educational landscape was deeply rooted in traditional values and religious doctrines, often resistant to progressive reforms. Van Til's strategy, as articulated by Beineke, involved engaging local educators and community leaders to build trust and foster mutual understanding.<sup>18</sup> For instance, in his diary, Van Til described his experience meeting local educators and parents and detailed his efforts to gain their trust through empathy and respect. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1962, he noted a visit to a teacher education program where villagers, mostly mothers, were learning teaching methods despite harsh conditions and low pay. He observed their eagerness to improve their teaching practices despite the challenging circumstances, reflecting his understanding and respect for their situation.<sup>19</sup> Van Til used these observations to emphasize the importance of empathy and respect in cross-cultural exchanges, demonstrating that genuine collaboration and respect for local traditions are crucial for successful educational reform. By respecting and incorporating local customs and beliefs, Van Til managed to introduce new ideas in a way that was acceptable to the community, thus overcoming resistance and facilitating meaningful change. His approach showed that understanding and adapting to the local context was essential for achieving progress in educational reform.

Building relationships was a critical component of Van Til's strategy for navigating cultural and educational landscapes. He recognized that effective educational reform could not be imposed from the outside but needed to be co-created with the local community. This approach involved not only working with educators but also engaging parents, students, and other stakeholders in the process—as Ira Shor emphasizes, empowering education requires the

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16 Mahdi Zahirinejad, "Education and Cultural Change in the Modernisation of Iran: The Role of Shi'ite Clerics and the Middle Class," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 75, no. 2 (2022): 122-137.

17 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 8.

18 John A. Beineke, *William Van Til: The Consistent Progressive* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998).

19 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 4.

active participation of all community members.<sup>20</sup> A vivid example of this can be found in Van Til's diary, where he describes his visit to a school that trained young men to teach in tent schools that moved with the tribes. Reflecting on the experience, he wrote, "These tribesmen are the equivalent of American Indians. They are strong, leathery, grave, tough, quiet, respectful. They are quietly contemptuous of city Iranians who are, to them, corrupt, soft, cowardly, pale. I ask whether they would rather teach in Tehran, Shiraz, or with the tribes. They chorus: 'With the tribes.'"<sup>21</sup> This encounter underscored Van Til's belief that education must be deeply connected to the culture and values of the people it serves. His ability to build strong, collaborative relationships was instrumental in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for educational change.

Charles Leadbeater and Annika Wong note that innovation in education often requires creative solutions to overcome limitations.<sup>22</sup> Van Til's experience in Iran offers a clear illustration of his pragmatic approach to education in resource-constrained environments. For example, his diary entries reveal the challenges faced in a village school with very basic facilities: "The school... two rooms of mud and stone separated by an entrance hall. The small windows in each room giving insufficient light. Dirt floor, very dusty. Black long benches, whittled and scarred."<sup>23</sup> This description highlights the severe resource constraints, underscoring Van Til's recognition of the difficulties in implementing reforms. Additionally, his efforts to train local educators and transform their identified problems into applicable solutions reflect his commitment to context-specific reform: "We asked for their recommendations... They replied with their problems... We translated their problems into recommendations."<sup>24</sup> This approach ensured that his reforms were relevant and implementable. Finally, Van Til's insights into the slow-paced life and his patience with local processes further emphasize his understanding of the need for sustainable and impactful change: "I who value short answers preferably in writing ask the same questions over and over... The task of adjustment and accommodation becomes mine."<sup>25</sup> These examples from Van Til's diary underscore his innovative problem-solving strategies and his dedication to adapting educational reforms to fit the local context, ensuring both their effectiveness and sustainability.

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20 Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

21 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 3.

22 Charles Leadbeater and Annika Wong, *Innovations in Education: Lessons from Pioneers Around the World* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

23 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 10.

24 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 8.

25 Van Til, *Iran All the Way*, 8.

## A PROMETHEAN VISIONARY EMBODYING THE PROMETHEAN SPIRIT

Comparing William Van Til's work to the myth of Prometheus offers a profound insight into his contributions to education. Just as Prometheus brought fire to humanity, symbolizing enlightenment and progress, Van Til dedicated his life to spreading the fire of knowledge. His efforts in school desegregation and his broader commitment to democratic education reflect a modern-day Promethean spirit, determined to empower individuals through education and create a more just society. Van Til's work emphasized the importance of knowledge-sharing, viewing education as a tool for empowerment and social change. In our world today, which is increasingly marked by social injustices and inequality, his thought has never been more vital. It urges educators to adopt inclusive practices that promote equity, foster critical thinking, and equip students to engage meaningfully in society.

Building on Sulek's exploration of the Promethean visionary, one can draw parallels to William Van Til's approach to education and philanthropy. While Sulek discusses the importance of fostering innovation and empowerment in addressing social issues, Van Til's legacy embodies these ideals through his unwavering commitment to democratic education and social justice.<sup>26</sup> Just as the Promethean spirit encourages individuals to challenge the status quo for the betterment of society, Van Til's work in desegregation and equitable educational practices demonstrates a similar drive to ignite positive change. By integrating Sulek's insights with Van Til's contributions, it becomes evident that both figures share a common goal: to illuminate the path toward empowerment and social equity through knowledge and education, ultimately inspiring others to carry the torch of progress in their own communities.

The root of Van Til's philosophy is in the transformative power of knowledge-sharing thought. According to Van Til, education is a fundamental right that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or where they live. This perspective is especially important in our globalized society, where disparities between developed and developing nations often hinder equitable access to quality education. Van Til championed inclusive practices that promote equity and foster critical thinking among students. By encouraging an environment where knowledge is freely shared and discussed, he laid the groundwork for an education system that empowers all learners to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

## A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

The emergence of a new generation of educators and scholars inspired by Promethean visions continue to advance their commitments to educational equity and innovation. One compelling example is the collaboration between

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26 Sulek, *Gifts of Fire*.

Jon Van Til and an Afghan scholar—which illustrate the cross-generational and cross-cultural impact of Van Til’s philosophy. Their story highlights the ongoing relevance of Van Til’s work in fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual learning across diverse cultural contexts. This new wave of educators and scholars continues to build on Van Til’s foundation, working towards a future where education serves as a bridge between cultures and a beacon of hope for all.

Decades ago, William Van Til’s journey to Iran marked a pioneering effort that paved the way for future educational exchanges. Following in his father’s footsteps, Jon Van Til has sought to advance this legacy. In 2019, Jon was awarded a position as Fulbright specialist to serve for six weeks in Istanbul as a visiting scholar at Marmara University. His assignment was to assist faculty and students in the delivery of programs in the area of public administration. During a meeting with graduate students, he met a young Afghan educator. This encounter was more than a symbolic nod to his father’s work; it represented a significant moment in the ongoing dialogue between educators from regions experiencing political unrest and social challenges. The interaction between Jon Van Til and the Afghan scholar highlights the enduring relevance of Promethean principles in contemporary education, underscoring the importance of mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration.

The narrative of the young Afghan educator exemplifies the resilience and determination needed to overcome the obstacles posed by political and social turmoil. This narrative, rich with experiences of struggle and triumph, deserves and is provided a detailed exploration in its own right in a companion paper. It will appear in the next issue of *Philanthropia*. It serves as a powerful reminder that the quest for educational equity and social justice is an ever-evolving journey, that requires continuous effort and unwavering dedication. The experiences and insights of this Afghan scholar enriches our understanding of the value and impact of Promethean advisitation as its practitioners seek meaningful ways of crossing many of the bewildering boundaries extant in the contemporary world.

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*Jon Van Til is Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University (USA), and has authored or co-edited over a dozen books on civil society and voluntary participation. He was twice elected President of the Association of Voluntary Action Scholars (now ARNOVA), edited its journal (now NVSQ) for twelve years, and is the recipient of its career award. He served five Fulbright terms as Scholar or Specialist in Northern Ireland, Hungary, and Turkey between 2004 and 2019.*

## IRAN ALL THE WAY: the 1962 Diary of an Advisor

By William Van Til, Edited by Jon Van Til

In 1962, a professor of education at New York University joined a small team of Americans invited by the Agency for International Development (AID) to spend 50 days in Iran on a venture in advisitation. Van Til, at the time 51 years old, was well known as a progressive educator with a central interest in the development of curriculum within the American secondary school. His previous travels had not taken him to Iran; nor had he developed any academic specialization in its study. Like many other academics who each year respond to governmentally supported invitations for similar assignments, he responded to the invitation with a complex mixture of emotions: interest in putting his professional expertise to work; uncertainty about the actual task to be performed; discomfort about leaving home and family for almost two months.

During the two months of his visit, May and June, WVT regularly recorded his reflections, both personal and professional, in a series of letters addressed to his wife and children. Upon his return to the States, these 28 letters were typed and bound into an unpublished manuscript of some 91 pages. In the present paper, the thoughts of this advisor/visitor have been edited, 61 years after their writing, by one of WVT's addressees, his son Jon, now professor emeritus of Rutgers University, Camden, and himself an experienced advising visitor as Fulbright specialist to Northern Ireland, Hungary, and Turkey.

The present diary employs the neologism, "advisor", to comprehend the experience of the expert sent on temporary assignment to a new and unfamiliar country. The letters of WVT present his own story, and the number of his letters are titled with the steps identified as basic to the process of advisitation:

- 1) ARRIVAL
- 2) MEETING THE HOST
- 3) TOURS
- 4) VISITS
- 5) OUR SIDE
- 6) ON THE ROAD
- 7) LUNCHING
- 8) NATIONAL CHARACTER
- 9) VILLAGES
- 10) ILLNESS AND HEALTH

- 11) COUNTING THE DAYS
- 12) FATIGUE
- 13) MEETING THE CONTRACT
- 14) THE FINAL REPORT
- 15) APPRECIATION
- 16) AND NOW...

WVT begins his diary, as may be expected from a traveler entering unfamiliar lands, with a description of the sites passed through, in this case a Germany familiar to him followed by a first-time vision of Istanbul from the banks of the Bosphorus: *“to see it, think of Budapest gone Byzantine. The same massive buildings, nearness to water, picturesque and poverty-stricken side streets.”* (Throughout this paper, the original entries by WVT are presented in italics.)

#### MAY 8: ARRIVAL

There follows a comfortable flight to Tehran, and the beginning of the formal visit. Having arrived at his destination, he is greeted by two members of his team and the AID host of the visit. Customs cleared, he is then driven to his accommodation, the description of which could be replicated line by line for his son’s 2019 Fulbright assignment in Istanbul: *The apartment is undistinguished. The internal architecture could be called barracks dormitory. Bare walls, passable cot beds, a couch, tile floors, a shower which occasionally achieves lukewarm, an occasional cockroach, an occasional naked bulb and occasional shade, a refrigerator with a pitcher of drinking water. As Mercutio pointed out when wounded, ‘Not as deep as a well or as wide as a door—but twill serve’.*

#### MAY 9: MEETING THE HOST

Up at 6:00 the next morning and to the offices of the Agency for International Development—*Much bigger than I thought—several buildings, scores of jeeps which run between the buildings the embassy and the apartments, elaborate personnel forms to fill out, pleasant staff members. I met the 30 in education (AID as a whole is several 100). They are pleasant people who have learned patience, who work long hours and are pleased with small results.... What their motivations are, I know not. They are said to live well, in villas and the like. They are the new “British”, the 19th century moved into the 20th.*

*The strangest experience of the day was to be a participant in my first interpreted conversation. No wonder the Russians and Americans find it hard to communicate! Doctor Hendershot (whose name must always appear on the mail to make it legitimate) brought me to a palace (literally) to meet the Minister of Education who is attended by a beribboned military officer and who is addressed as Your Excellency. He was head of the teacher’s organization which won a strike and doubled teacher pay. The interpreter, a PhD from Michigan State and a fine young man, translated*

*what the minister said to Hendershot and me what we said to the minister and entourage. Incidentally, the interpreter is head of the research project from which the minister wanted to transfer funds. And all this he dutifully translated—and did not interpolate his views.*

*We held a fascinating conversation with an Iranian intellectual who is head of the Iranian 5-year plan. The subject: Iranians when trained to teach head for the cities. The villages have nothing to hold them—mud huts and as our intellectual said sadly, “No amenities”.*

Accommodations secured and introductions completed, the advisitation process enters its third stage: the presentation of the touristic highlights of the host country. Tehran has been briefly introduced by the commute, which WVT conducts by foot from the apartment to the AID headquarters, and dinner at a pleasant local restaurant. But only one more day is scheduled in the capitol, and the visitor observes: “I’ve been two days in Tehran getting acclimated in a confusing environment where I have to understand what they mean.”

## MAY 11: TOURS

The tour of the country was scheduled for 9 days and begins with a flight to the city of Shiraz and the nearby historic site of Persepolis. The visitor is duly awed. “Incredible”, he writes. *13 high columns elaborately carved, surmounted by legendary beasts. 13 left of literally hundreds of columns that held the palace roof. Also there are remains of great courtrooms. All were destroyed by Alexander the Great, some say to please his courtesan who wanted to set fires after a drinking party. Bas relief remain on walls and two keep recurring to remind the viewer of the brutal nature of the age. One is a winged and sealed lion sinking his teeth into the haunch of an agonized unicorn. The other is a king sticking his sword into the belly of a mythical beast which has reared up on its hind legs. This was the realm of Darius, King of Kings, and Xerxes.*

Then back to Shiraz and reports of shimmering colors, glistening pools, blooming flowers, inspiring poems. Touring the park that hosts the tombs of poets Hafiz and Saadi, the visiting educator comes across *a beggar who holds a boy child with legs spindle thin from rickets. Seeing a tourist, he snaps open the boy’s mouth with a finger to point with piteous fawning to a supposedly aching tooth in the child’s mouth. I am told the beggars often rent such children. It is easy to believe and it helps you not to see him. So you believe it. If you don’t see him, he doesn’t exist for you. But the child exists.*

## MAY 13: VISITS

The visitors call on the Ostan Chief, the County Superintendent. *Underlings open doors, proceed us to the great man’s presence. He sits behind a king size desk*

*with no papers. Above him, pictures of the handsome Shah look down on us we proceed through our translator. He grants us permission to visit. We drink tea in glasses served by a deferential underling. All is ceremonial.*

*We visit the schools. A class of 21 year old girls in the 13 year program are learning to teach reading. I ask them where they want to teach. Unanimously, Shiraz. But first they must go to their Siberia, the villages, for several required years. If they survive, they may return to Shiraz. Out in the pest holes of the villages, there are no health facilities, toilets, or supervision of teaching. Survive three years and back to Shiraz. Meanwhile, 16 and 17 year old boys are also being trained in normal schools. They are village boys. Most intend to teach their required years and get out to Tehran or Shiraz. One tells me, "in this country, we lack dedication." And 70% of Iran live in hovels in villages.*

*Then to a school for training young men to teach in tent schools which move with the tribes. And a surprise! I am back in Oklahoma! These tribesmen are the equivalent of American Indians. They are strong, leathery, grave, tough, quiet, respectful. They live in a neat boarding school outside of town. They are quietly contemptuous of city Iranians who are, to them, corrupt, soft, cowardly, pale. I ask whether they would rather teach in Tehran, Shiraz, or with the tribes. They chorus: "With the tribes."*

*The leader of this training school is a son of a khan, a tribesman who came to America and studied Indian education. I asked him whether he is educating the 66 boys in his boarding school to be tribesmen or Iranians. He explains that it is between the two. But I see it as nearer to the tribe. He is an Iranian tribesman but he might well have been a Texan. He and our Iranian intellectual immediately take an unspoken but clearly communicated dislike to each other. Texas versus Harvard.*

*We visit a well equipped trade school in Shiraz. 21 different trades; Space; Equipment. And the enrollment is dwindling below 200 because, in Tehran, the minister's deputy decided to reduce the school from a six-year junior-senior school to a junior high alone. Boys now graduate at 14, too young for the trades they supposedly have learned, not allowed to enter even the vocational senior high school. Why not allowed? Who knows? They are not employed; They drift; They lose their skills. A blunder at the ministry: the engineer in charge wants to save money on the school. Why? To build more trade schools. Alice in Wonderland!*

*As the work day closes, we return to the Ostan Chief. He has gathered his subordinates. He has an audience. He talks and is translated for 1 1/2 solid hours. He is a superintendent. He has problems... The ministry, the teachers who did not read the manuals. 4:00 to 5:30. One gets tired of drinking so much tea. John Payne attempts to conclude and the chief says dolefully that Americans have not learned patience. We will come back, we say. Bring more patience, he says.*

## MAY 14: OUR SIDE

The visiting team is invited to dinner at the home of an AID official in Isfahan. *I honestly asked as we came up to the house, is this an apartment? He chuckled. New, beautiful construction, two full time servants, 4 bedrooms, study, three bathrooms, palatial living room, dining room, several balconies, garden, high walls, many books, etc. And a party: the assistant American counsel, the British consul, the Fulbright student from the English department at Ohio State with his beautiful wife, the American girl married to the Iranian, the aid men and women a sumptuous smorgasbord meal after many drinks... Quite an evening all in all. The British Counsel told me that he doubted the necessity of educating Iranian peasants who only happened to be about 75% of all the Iranians. Ed drove us home in his beautiful new American Chevrolet. A fine host along with his gracious wife.*

*Monday, we labored. The ceremonial call on the Superintendent, the labored translation, the slow progress, the curious students. The high or low spot was a visit to an emergency program for training teachers for the county villages. The battered chairs were occupied by 30 women huddled under their chadors (long body length shawls covering the head, clutched nervously to cover the mouth, covering the entire body to the dust) and 10 men. Ages: 16 to 21 about 17; 21 to 26 about 10; over 26 about 13. Average education: 7 to 9 years in school. Mostly villagers, mostly mothers. Due to teach at 100 rial (\$1.33) a day. I asked them what kept people from teaching in villages and guess what they said? Yes, money.*

*The teacher of methods of teaching math taught them to fold a paper in four, tear off 1/4 and teach the children that this is 1/4. They complied eagerly. They asked me what a teacher salary and life in America were like and I told them. As I did, I kept feeling so sorry for the starving New York teachers on strike and for my malnourished colleagues and their miserable salaries at NYU. We really have it tough in America. And the rugged living conditions in American homes abroad: things are tough all over, I guess.*

*At a good teacher education program for girls in their 13th year of education, the activity program had been introduced and had gone mad. Units, projects, charts, charts, charts! The girls proudly reported two projects via charts on walls. One was Foods of Iran. The charts showed magnificent foods, clipped from American magazines. The second was 'Life in Iran'. The charts contained pictures of an Iranian engineer's family at \$20,000 per year income. I gently suggested that the poverty-stricken children of the villages couldn't conceive of such foods and living. I suggested charts that would help improvement of living conditions. It was a new idea to the girls. They listened seriously, then told the translator of a great block to following this idea in the project. He translated. They would be unable to get pretty pictures to put on their charts if they followed my suggestion.*

## MAY 19: ON THE ROAD

*The road to Zahedan is a story of some experiences on the trip East in Iran to the corner of the world where Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan join. The road runs from Kerman to Zahedan. The road is used advisedly, for 400 miles east there is no other road. No road parallels it; No road crosses it. The gravel road of small broken stone and dust goes remorselessly East, across deserts, in the shadows of mountains, through winding mountain passes, through dead level straight ahead hours too.*

Throughout this section of their visit, in which he and his colleagues are taken across the desert from Isfahan to Zahedan, WVT most clearly endures the experience of being a stranger in a strange land. He learns, several times during this single long day, about the bounds and limits of control within the advisitorial process. Two jeeps conduct the group to the city of Bam, where an ancient town and castle are explored, accompanied by an enthusiastic band of local teenage boys. On returning to the point at which they had been dropped off, it was quickly seen that one Jeep had disappeared. But it returned, carrying the two drivers, who explained that they had business in town. The AIDS official raged at them. They had been told not to leave and there had been valuables left on the seats. One wag added, “drivers always have business in town,” but this time they had lost much face.

*Back through the twisting alleys. But a Jeep was overheating, and as the drivers tinkered, another Jeep came by. A school man of Bam, a specialist on fundamental education (literacy). They were waiting for us. Dinner was “ready” at his house. The judge was there, and the agricultural specialist. He had word from the county superintendent that we were on route. We must stop.*

*We protested. We had planned to eat in the desert far along at a lonely stop for trucks. The outcome was foregone. We went to his house. It was a middle class, upper section, Iranian home. It was down a narrow, twisted, dusty street, one jeep wide. The door in the mud stucco wall opens and you are in the sanctuary, the house, and shortly in the garden. The garden has two stages, a gravel area with a pond surrounded by concrete slabs and small trees. Just beyond a wall another garden through which the jube flowed. At its meanest, the jube is a gutter through which grey water slowly sloshes. At its best, the jube is a near creek, also grey, but forceful in speed. Everything happens beside a jube. Clothes are washed; parts of people are washed; litter is disposed; dusty feet are dangled; children pee. Water is drawn for household purposes. Sophisticated people boil it for beverage. In the jube I washed with soap carefully laid by and dried with a towel on the tree.*

*The living room is spacious, perhaps 15 feet by 35 feet. As everywhere in Iran, from the pictures high on the wall, well beyond touch, two men look down. One is Ali, the dark eyed, bushy faced son-in-law of Muhammad. The other is the Shah in military dress, or smiling at his son, or stately with his wife, or peers. The Shah is everywhere. Over administrators’ desks, he signs papers; in homes he gazes kindly*

at his son. Aside from these, there are small pictures of kids, and a shelf with a red gauze shell cover and a porcelain cat and implausible artificial flowers. Steel arm-chairs, like American porch furniture, are padded with heavy red felt bottom and back like old-fashioned parlor chairs in America. The floor is carpeted proudly wall to wall with one large Persian carpet.

The children are heard and briefly seen. They peep at the strange visitors from what they assume to be invisibility behind drapes, outside windows, or lattice work. And, miracle, the mother is briefly seen as she directs food preparation. This is because she is a home economics teacher and is modern and dresses modern. In the other two homes in which so far I have spent three hours each for meals, the women were never glimpsed. Of course, she does not sit down to eat with us. This would be carrying modernity too far. Between our arrival at 11:30 and 1:00 PM when the lunch that was "ready" was served, she prepares the food while we have tea and fruit in the living room. The board groans when we arrive.... We eat heavily and when we leave the table, the Americans, the judge, et cetera... 2/3 remain untouched. The mother, father, older children pose for our pictures. The 10-year-old boy has been the solemn deft and silent servant throughout the meal. The older girl only prepares and is not to be seen. In Iran, a hard time will be experienced by organizers of the League of Women Voters. But it is 2:00 PM, and the road to Zahedan leads east....

There is another level of the road to Zahedan that I hesitate to tell you about. But I must, for it is part of the truth and necessary to an honest narrative. I think you know, for you are highly sensitive to what I think, that I have been struggling against—let's call them—forebodings of personal disaster in connection with this trip with that part of my mind which has rejected spookery and supernatural manifestation since the time of my father's death when I was 15. I know that forebodings are part of mankind's overactive imagination, reflections of the temporary state of the psyche, pure and simple. A minority contender for my mind encourages me to wear my comedy-tragedy pin (and way of looking at the universe) on days when I need the breaks.

The camel of our light hearted jests (The traffic in Iran is heavier than in New York; Watch out for the trampling by the camel traffic) became in my mind the symbol of Nemesis, the embodiment of the foreboding.... At one gendarme checkpoint, a camel was tethered. I went over to look at him. Let no one tell you that the camel is a good, bland animal out of Walt Disney. Ask any camel driver. Camels are mean tempered, arrogant animals that hate men. I took his picture and he showed his teeth in a snarl and made unfriendly noises that combined the growl, snarl, and groan. The camel: my symbol of the road to Zahedan.

Several colleagues decide to be pictured riding the camel. Dave goes first. The camel snarled. Herb mounted, a beret atop his head. The camel grew angrier and pettier and noisier. I decided that I had taken enough from this camel with his spare teeth, his ugly sound, his nasty beady eyes, his hostility to life. So I mounted him too. The gendarmes forced him up and as one set of legs unfolded, I lurched up, and as

*the second pair unfolded, I lurched again. One holds front and rear on what passes for a pillow on the stack of old carpets that makes the saddle. A picture while I was up. Then the camel broke the string binding the saddle to the beast, alarming the gendarmes who could do nothing about it. The camel grew more hostile. They forced it down and I dismounted...some obscure necessity requiring me to tell death that life was to be lived fully till its end and the death for this individual or for the world was to be flaunted, denied even the courtesy of credibility, denied till it prevailed as it must. Meanwhile, ride the camel.*

## MAY 21: LUNCHING

Zahedan is reached, visited for a day, and then flown from back to Tehran. WVT reflects on Learnings from the trip: Health and time do divide us. *The Iranians work hard to cater to our strange notions at the hotel in Zahedan, the waiter before serving our Pepsi Cola and Canada Dry orange made sure, with pride, that we saw him as he conspicuously washed the glasses with great care in the courtyard pool the dozen lovely large goldfish that live in the quiet pool did not resent a bit being disturbed by the dipping of the glasses. As to time, it would never occur to the home economist wife of Bam that there was a courtesy conflict between the many dishes for lunch she felt that her obligation to serve us and the time factor, an hour and a half wait for lunch at midday with the desert yet to cross. The conflict which the American hostess would have immediately seen was no conflict at all to her she prepared all the dishes; we waited from 11:30 AM till 1:00 PM. She was a most gracious hostess. Desserts are more important than deserts.*

And in Zahedan, the Superintendent hosted the group for another 3 hour meal. *The wife at no time appeared. The Superintendent served Scotch and offers Winston cigarettes. He dresses in western style. He talks of the necessity of the hot lunch program. He complains of the central government. And his son serves, quick and silent as the cat. His women, daughters and wife, are carefully kept from the sight of his visitors. Have another Scotch before you go? More tea? Canada Dry?*

## MAY 23: NATIONAL CHARACTER

*The cultural historians debate whether national character exists. Meanwhile the Iranian character grows clearer and clearer and more and more difficult to crack. To reverse roles, imagine if you were an oriental sent to America to aid and faced with the problem of slowing Americans down to the oriental pace and developing A philosophy of fatalism in place of one of progress and forward movement. Your leverage is the educational system. How do you do it?*

*In the case of Iran, the problem is that the Iranian has no higher loyalty than to himself and his immediate family. Call it kindly individualism; Call it harshly opportunism or every man for himself. Call it what you will, it takes every form and is on every hand. No appeal to religion overpowers it; no appeal to patriotism whether in the form of national welfare or humanitarianism breaks through. Democratic*

*values except individualism are not comprehensible sanitation for all and hold no charm.*

*Set side by side a centuries-old ability to adjust to the conqueror, the imperialist, and in time absorb him. Alexander destroyed their Persepolis; his warriors married Persian women; Persia absorbed the Greeks and went on. The Arabs conquered Persia and brought it the Muslim religion. The Persians developed a splinter religion based on Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali, and made their deviant interpretations prevail. The Turks and the Mongols invaded; Persia absorbed them. Britain drove for India across Persia; Russia looked for warm water to the South. Iran acquiesced in their influence. America moved in. And again on the surface Iran accepted the newcomers. She did in a haphazard fashion what the newcomers wanted her to do. But she accepted because it was what they wanted; she did not do these things for herself, because they were things she wanted.*

*Add carefully wrought negative explanations as to why things cannot be done, neatly developed in the interests of face saving and you can understand what the students of national character find it necessary to say.... All of this lies behind our struggles. I, who will not stand in a line at a movie or a restaurant for 5 minutes in America, wait hours in Iran as inevitable forces delay planes, guests, ad infinitum. I who am economical with small talk in America spend long hours in the ceremonials of being received or being dined. I who value short answers preferably in writing ask the same questions over and over, as translated ably, completely understood, and have them neatly evaded and swamped with circumlocution. The task of adjustment and accommodation becomes mine. When in Rome.... You must; there is no alternative.*

*Some illustrations? Yesterday we met a group of Iranian Fulbrighters, science teachers in high school who had spent a year at least studying in America. They now teach science in Tehran high schools. We asked for their recommendations for people who would teach in positions similar to theirs. They replied with their problems. We urged recommendations. They replied with problems. We translated their problems (students are not interested) into recommendations (teach future teachers to know how to interest students) and ask for recommendations not problems. They replied with problems. The government should build great museums for the students to create interest. But we said, could they not make a simple museum exhibit with their students? Not possible; We have nothing. Not even stones? The government should do it, was the response. One hour— no runs, no hits. Ask a simple question; get a complex evasion.*

*Or in Zabedan. (In Zabedan did Kubla Khan no pleasure Dome decree, and Jube, the sacred river, runs with Iranian pee.) the Superintendent lives in a lovely house which cost considerably to build. He entertains lavishly in a region where, we heard, some Baluchis have been reduced literally to eating grass in order to survive the drought. He has a clean-cut philosophy of education period: Hot lunch. Give him power to administer the hot lunch money and the Baluchis and village people will attend school. Do not give him the administration of this money and they will*

*not go to school. He can talk of no problems of curriculum, selection, other ways of recruiting. Only hot lunch. In America he would be calculating football receipts and entertaining the community elite.*

*Yet this letter is skewed so far. It leaves out many charming national characteristics. The pleasant humor of people when not defending or striving. The deep-rooted courtesy. The enjoyment of beautiful weather. The way they prize little gardens and carry flowers. The patience with adversity. The charm of the laughing children. The endless rote recitation by students memorizing as they walk. The endless fight against the encroaching dryness, against admitting the horror of the emptiness. The enraged dedicated few who feel immobilized. The helpfulness to strangers. They often seem themselves like strangely old, preternaturally tired wise children. We will see you again, we say. If Allah wills it, they respond. Fate is in charge and directs mankind.*

## MAY 25: THE VILLAGE

*Today we headed out in the omnipresent jeep with a handshake embossed on the door to find me a village. I put it this way—find me a village because I have been urging my good AID hosts since setting Jeep tread on the road to help get me inside a village to get the feel of it. I particularly wanted to get acquainted with an out-of-the-way village, not one accustomed to American eyes.... Our problem: can a literate person be expected to stay with village teaching or will he flee to cities?*

*At Tabriz my perceptive host, Paul Regan, at whose delightfully Americanized Iranian home I am staying from Thursday morning to Sunday morning, was amenable to my suggestion.... We headed back toward Tehran for 20 or so miles, then took a dirt road to the right toward mountains alternately striped with snow and coal black rocks. On our right ran an incredible red mountain and I mean red in the shadow, not sun, for it had become a threatening sky. When the red mountain ran out, it was replaced by a mountain of green, grey, and brown and shades between, great sedimentary masses like those of a surrealistic artist which made-up the scene. Oxen pulled plows in the valley; 90% of the Iranian plowing of soil is by oxen.*

*The road soon stopped being a road and became a trail. The jeeps, however, are incredible. Our Jeep slithered down and up sheer hills, crossed fast flowing rivers, jolted and jumped through a long winding valley toward our village destination Cortana. We passed an agricultural normal school training for agriculture and elementary school teaching in villages, then no people except an occasional farmer plowing, a boy on a bike going who knows where, a shepherd with a mixed flock of sheep and goats.*

*Finally after about two hours, we saw the village lying below in a cleft of the hills.... The village was rock and plastered huts built into a steep rising hill. You thought of pueblos though there were no ladders. The little children, dressed in simple dresses of varied faded colors and pants and torn shirts for boys, looked at us in astonishment. The adult men who looked piratical in black pants worn formerly white shirts and a variety of headgear from black hats to bound cloth, gathered as we*

asked for the chief. They were mostly silent, responding to our interpreter who must have been more of a cultural shock than we were for he was impeccably business suit dressed while Paul and I were at least in sport clothes.

The chief wasn't in. The man answered questions. It was a village of 600. The school had been built five years ago. The farthest anyone in the village had gone to school was fifth year. No one had ever gone to school outside the village except the Mullah. All others were illiterate.

There were two institutions and two institutions only in the village and they are symbols of the fight between old and new going on in Iran. They are the school and the carpet factory. Our interpreter asked some 8 to 10 year-old boys, like everybody else on holiday Friday, Muslim style, what they did during the week. Seven out of eight said they worked in the carpet factory.

The carpet factory is the only modern building in the village. Small, of yellow brick, one floor, with roof vents, a few glass windows. It was locked. It was owned by an absentee landlord, the curse of Iran, and managed by his foreman. A few yards away was the school. Two rooms of mud and stone separated by an entrance hall. The small windows in each room giving insufficient light. Dirt floor, very dusty. Black long benches, whittled and scarred. Long black desks for the benches on which four could crowd. On the wall, a map of Europe. Up front, the teacher's table and chairs. Long pages for attendance records. Nothing more. No materials, no nothing. The light filtering into the darkness, the dust, the black scarred benches, the little room. The other room was its twin as we came out of the school into the light and offered cigarettes to the men who were amused that Paul's cigarettes showed a camel, though American. We talked outside the school. And along came a wizened old man, with graying beard, creased forehead, black leathery skull cap, tattered long brown coat over blue patch trousers. He was really an old man, about 45. Life expectancy in Iran is 52. Half of the children die before age 5. People fell back deferentially. Should we have tea? Of course. He was the old Mullah, the Muslim religious man who read religious books and can use the abacus.

We followed him up the hill to a hut no different from the rest. In the entrance hall, itself a small hut, a saddle was stored. He pushed open a door to an inner room. We took off our shoes and went in. It was a bare white plastered room with one floor to ceiling window which looked at the bare hillside across the valley that faced the hill village. It was, of course, unscreened and opened. On the floor were three Persian rugs, covering the entire area, wall to wall. Built into the plaster were two book shelves for the Koran and other religious books. On one wall, some tattered and faded pictures of his son and himself when young. By the window, a book that looked like a ledger and wasn't, an abacus, a few pieces of paper with Iranian writers which is of course, in Arabic. There was no furniture whatever.

The Mullah motioned us to sit on the floor on a pillow reserved for guests and lean our backs against a pile of Persian rugs in the corner. We engaged in small talk as

*the tea was prepared. When it arrived, it took the form of a samovar, copper yellow and much used, some small tea glasses, a flowered plate into which you pour tea from glasses and drink, a copper tray. A young Mullah carefully and systematically made the tea which, as usual, was good. Another young Mullah with dark piercing eyes, Valentino cheek type with white terton, watched us carefully.*

*The old Mullah who sat and rocked his body as he talked was a wise man. We talked school; did he believe the Mullahs should teach schools? It proved that the old Mullah was his staunchest supporter of separation of church and state as any PO AO in the USA: Mullahs should stick to religious teaching. Teachers should teach in schools. But be friendly. He encouraged the teachers to tell him their troubles and he attempted to help. The teachers came from Tabriz, the city I was visiting. He said the seat teachers were satisfied. Could they be?*

*What did they need in Matanog, population 800? They now had a bathhouse but they needed more water supply. He understood in America people had electric blankets. He would like to know more of this. He had also heard we killed people by electricity. We asked him how bad people were handled in Matanog. Some were brought to the gendarmes. In other cases, the people handled the matter themselves through a third party. A theft for instance. What third party? Himself. He was also the judge. Where? This room.*

*Did the people vote? Yes, on occasion. Where? This room. They brought their ballots and left them on the floor of his room. Sometimes they reached this high. He demonstrated. On such a day he served much tea. In Iranian villages the landlords instruct the peasants whose names to write on the ballots. The names are always the landlords and his cronies. In villages where the people own part of the land their votes are bought for one or two taramon, 10 to \$0.20 by the landlords or other candidates.*

*What was our religion? He explained that Christ was respected by Muslims as a good prophet but not the Son of God. There is only one God and his name is Allah.*

*We talked a long time, about an hour, and then went back to the Jeep, surrounded by few villagers now. Where were they? We drove off and found out. We climbed out of the cleft to the valley plateau. From on high, we looked down to hundreds of sheep and goats and scores and scores of villagers milking the animals. The confused sound that rose to us sounded like cheering in a stadium. The economic system was simple. The shepherds and goatherds grazed the village animals during the day while the villagers worked in the fields. Each villager owned and recognized his own few animals. Each day the animals were milked. Every fortnight, the milk collected went to the herders who, in turn, sold it in the village. This was the herders' day. After milking, the lambs and kids which had been separated from the mothers were freed and with great noise raced 1/4 of a mile to find their mares and do as best they could with the remainder. To see from a mountain top the race to join the main herd and to hear the bellows was an amazing experience. We sat silently in the Jeep, eating our sandwiches. Such peasants eat bread and yogurt, an agriculture man later told me.*

*They eat meat once in two weeks, if lucky. They drive their flock to market in Tehran annually. The train takes 15 hours for the same trip; The plane two hours. How long do they take?*

## MAY 27: COUNTING THE DAYS

*I do my job effectively, if quietly, and wake each morning to count the days like prayer beads and wish I were home. The break-even point refuses to come. For instance 18 down, 32 to go. Remind me please not to accept direction of this project for the ensuing five years. It might slip my mind. Seriously, I am almost always lonely for you.*

## MAY 30: ILLNESS AND HEALTH

*Since my return to Tehran on Sunday, I have had my first illness. It was a combination of stomach cramps and chills and fever. Sunday night I consumed aspirin and bufferin; they piled blankets upon me; I quaked into the night and rose in the morning in adequate health to continue work at home in the form of studying documents. Tuesday, we had an AID conference at which twenty of us Americans sat around and shared ideas on what does not work in developing Iranian attitudes and the desire to do things for themselves.*

*Tuesday night at dinner, we had an amusing incidental meeting with an American who was leaving for home that day. A frequent conversational gambit in Iran among Americans is how much longer will you be here? I leave in 29 days. Is that so? I'm starting my second two year hitch. They sound like genteel residents of Alcatraz passing the time of day. He was an NYU graduate in public administration, a former Washington lawyer and lobbyist. I asked politely, what has been your work here? He said, I have been tax adviser to the Ministry of Finance. There was silence with things going on in it. I said with restraint, this might possibly be the most discouraging current assignment in Iran. He said, that is the understatement of the year.*

*He told us some stories of taxes in Iran. . . . His primary story was of how they discovered that a person might go to the equivalent of the motor vehicles bureau with money in hand to pay for his auto license. Yet the process would take two to three days of his time in attendance. So he and his associates, horrified, streamlined it so that it would take 30 minutes or less for issuance. Pleased with the new system well installed, they returned to their work in the Ministry of Finance. Five months later they rechecked on the workings of their new system. They found that it had been abandoned and that the old system of two or three days was back in force. Why? He explained delicately, "The new system did not give the officials time enough to negotiate on the costs involved."*

*In this setting the reactions of Americans are varied and fairly predictable after you come to know their pattern. Here's a series: the director of the education branch*

of AID is Clarence Hendershot, a small persistently pleasant man who is an international career man of about my age. He has learned to follow the rules carefully, to pay attention to protocol, to be patient, to repeat, to expect little, to delegate, to avoid detail work. To like to hold meetings. There is Dave Laird, his right hand man, a former California school administrator, white haired, often quite wise. He is worried about the fact that the campaign to eliminate illiteracy from the villages is not accompanied by concern about the 15% who need to think our way and be the leaders of life in Iran. Literacy alone could open the way for the devastatingly simple and successful pamphlets of the communists. He always looks for a middle way, part Iranian, part American. He explains the custom of superintendents and principals keeping money they save from school expenses for their own use as a native and different way of financing the salaries of people above the teaching level. It is a comprehensive tolerance. Understand the pattern of relationships, he advises. Know what is possible within the system. The field man assigned to the counties or special tasks all varied. Quiet Paul Regan who thinks more than he says; Charles Dove, divorced from a wife who refused (I hear) to come back for a second hitch; Hans Burgie, naively outraged that people don't behave as they say they believe; Sherman, bitter, unhappy, enraged at government both Iranian and American.

In this setting we of the NYU group proceed each other in our characteristic ways. John Payne is not only the team captain; I attribute to him the characteristics of a fullback. He plugs along day after day, hour after hour, attempting to talk to as many people as possible over as long a period as possible. He talks to them by day; he writes at night. As far as I can tell, he has had no day or half-day free in all the seven-day weeks he has been in Iran which is, of course, not an excellent pattern for a man who I understand had a heart problem in his health background. He doesn't see the need for shaping recommendations as early as possible and then trying these out with people, but instead he spreads a wide net and asks for all ideas his interviewees can muster. John fights off fatigue and stomach upset and keeps plugging away, and his system seems to work. Over the past few days, he encountered an Iranian version of our contract which held that the contract contained no provision for a per diem to cover our expenses while in Iran. We had been promised by NYU \$15 a day in Tebran for lodging, food, cabs, etc. And \$11.00 on the road. He got the Iranian AID run around so, like a good fullback, he walked it through. His succession: Hendershot, Laird, the Comptroller, the legal office, back to the comptroller's office, back to the legal office, back to the comptroller's office. We will not pay. After a day and 1/2 he wired Andy to get the NYU legal office to review the contract with Washington.

John goes to places where people have arranged to meet him and waits. One of two things happens: they are late or they are waiting at another place. So he goes to the other place or places. Fortunately in Tebran there are few places. They are our apartment where I often work as often as I can; the Aban building, our headquarters, the annex, the embassy, the ministry. Surely he will find his appointment at one of these places. The Americans, incidentally, have gone Iranian in this respect.

*Paul Regan made an appointment with the Fulbright American for us to talk to Fulbrighters at the US Information Service office from four to seven on a Tuesday. We went there. The meeting was at Fulbright offices 5 to 8. The day was right; it was Tuesday.*

*Herb Schwartz is our amiable science education man. He is humorous and pleasant, interested in philosophies of teaching science, good in person to person situations. He takes voluminous notes on everything; he is our Thomas Wolfe, our total recall. He is our shopper. He buys and buys: some of ours, rugs, vases, candlesticks, jewelry, whips, a Turkestan jacket, and so on and so on and so on, and mails it all back to the States in small or gigantic cartoons. He looks into shops while I look at people.*

*How do they perceive me? Probably as a person who on frequent occasions requires time to be alone. I walk alone, I write, I find a reading corner. As a person who is doing a job with moderate intensity but no great relish. As a person who has read a lot by now on Iran and is close to final conclusions for survey purposes. As a person uncomfortable without structure. As a sharp onlooker but one who has too many doubts to identify with anything or anyone in the situation. As one who believes with the Iranians, who may have assimilated me unwittingly, that things are more complicated than most people think.*

## JUNE 1: FATIGUE

On the 1st of June, WVT adds to the listing of the date an ironic quote: “yes, Virginia, there is a June!” On June 3rd, he adds to the dates listing: “half down, half to go!” Memorial Day is remembered, if not celebrated, a swimming pool is found and used, breakfasts and cocktail parties are scheduled. An evening at the movies, along with Herb; visits to museums. An opportunity to meet with visiting Americans to talk about American education; the presentation of an invited lecture on his most recent book, The Making of a Modern Educator. And then, for the first time in nearly a month, a day off from the project!

The recognition dawns that the NYU group has run out of steam and needs to slow its pace. (But not team leader John, who schedules meetings for himself in Ahwaz the day the thermometer hits 115 degrees.). WVT’s letters begin to fill with touristic descriptions and observations of forays into Tehran and musings as to which title it best deserves. There’s the Paris of Asia, but the chaos of its street life suggests to him that it might better be called the Los Angeles of Asia. By June 8, his annotation of the day is lengthened to “Friday the Muslim Sunday; June 28 at 5:00 AM I leave; the third day off of 31.”

## JUNE 8: MEETING THE CONTRACT

*The time has come when the jaunts, long as the road to Zahedan or short as yesterday’s to Dardasht, literally “place in the desert”, are ending. We turn now to the hard*

*intellectual work of any survey: determining about 50 recommendations, phrasing them tightly, defending them each for a page or so in a land of contradictions where statistics are lacking, wrapping all into the survey report....*

*In the beginning there was the Ministry of Education. I suspect in the end there will be the ministry. Physically, the ministry is a set of interrelated chunky buildings separated by pleasant formal gardens. Humanly the ministry is an aggregation of mutually suspicious human beings, a number indeterminate even to the paymaster because some on the payroll never put in an appearance at the ministry building. Some say they could not, even if they wished, since they are shades. Others are tangible, but outs who remain on the rolls. One brave researcher has estimated 700 employees of whom more than 200 are servants.*

*Let us start with the latter group and work up to His Excellency. The servants are illiterate and hospitable. They sit in the hallways before office doors and droop until a visitor comes by. They then make honest gestures of welcome, indicate great servility, and pull aside the green curtain admitting you to the outer office of whatever great man. They are seeing no more till departure, because higher level servants bring tea when one enters the inner sanctum.*

*In the outer office, low level officials spin and toil over various long hand writings which are interminable. A single secretary presides over a single typewriter with great dignity and loftiness. She wears modern dress. There are books on the walls and impressive stacks of documents, a word pronounced by Americans and Iranians alike with great savor and relish. As, for instance, I must go and work on documents.*

*From the inner office one reaches the conference room. All great men have conference rooms. Sometimes the conference room contains the great one's desk dominating the room with its size and opulence. Sometimes the conference room is separate but always with large stuffed chairs often with red brocade and elaborate design. The rooms are large.*

*The great one, if influenced by East and not West, sits behind his desk during the audience. He speaks long and sonorously and the translator interprets to the visitors on the stuffed chairs set in an irregular circle away from his desk. If Western influenced, the great one leaves his desk and sits with the common ones in the circle which looks onto his desk. Thus he shows his democracy. Sometimes he lets subordinates talk. Thus he shows his grasp of participation.*

*The great one expresses his pleasure at the opportunity to put himself at the visitor's service. The visitors express their pleasure that in his ceaseless duties the great one has with great effort found time to see them. The ministry closes for the day at 2:00 PM. Tea is served by a deep bowing, shabbily dressed servant. Tea biscuits calling back social teas of my childhood are served. Cakes are served. More tea is served. The Persian word is taroof, meaning ceremonial politeness. Much taroof.*

*The major questions are asked. Often the great one attempts to learn what the visitors prefer him to do so that he may agree politely and admire the ingenuity of this*

idea. Certainly this will be carried out! On such occasions the naive visitor leaves, happy, mission accomplished. All is go, he thinks. Nothing whatever results. Months later he inquires: Why? He learns, it was not possible. Or unfortunately there was not the money! Or no support could be found. It is delicately implied that other officials intervened. No one's feelings are hurt by this process. Persians do not say 'no.' It is rude. Nor do they say, 'I do not know.' One must not lose face.

The experienced visitor phrases his question in such a way as to keep the great one free from knowing what he wants. The great one indicates that there is much to be said on all eight sides and waits for the visitor to tip his hand. They bargain in this way on ideas as merchant and buyer bargain in the bazaar....

Toward the close the great one indicates that there might be a possibility that one of the eight possibilities might be preferable but one never knows because the future is unknowable and events, he says, are in the hands of Allah. The visitor satisfied, departs. Occasionally, something then results. Not often. Sometimes.

Ministries come and go. When a minister falls, all down to the level of principles throughout the country but not including principals become the outs. They go back to being professors at the university of Tehran, teachers in cities, workers for AID, Peace Corps, Fulbright. Skillful politicians stay on the payroll. A new group becomes the ins, giving up their duties temporarily as professors at university of Tehran, teachers in cities, workers for AID, Peace Corps, Fulbright. Skillful politicians stay on the payroll. Rather nice arrangement....

I have met the three top men. Minister #1 was the leader of the teacher organization that successfully struck a year ago. Salaries were almost doubled and he was made minister. He looks like a hard bitten American politician. His right hand man looks a bit like Harpo Marx and talks like an American. His opponents say he does not practice what he preaches but has learned to preach well for American ears. The third power is the Farley- Curley- Lewis Howe- Robert Kennedy of Iran. Rich, personable, persuasive, friend of the Shah, he heads vocational education and skillfully sabotages training vocational teachers in favor of turning out engineers through teacher training institutions. He struggles to build expensive vocational schools which are not used and scarcely attended through lack of teachers to man them. So he builds new unused schools, Pharaoh's monuments in modern dress.

Here is a typical administration struggle. With American planning and funds, plus person funds, a Center for vocational education was planned and built at Dardasht, 20 minutes from Tehran in the baking desert. Elaborate vocational shops— not to be confused with industrial arts—automobile, foundry, machine shop etc., about 8 in all. About 40 classrooms seating about 30 students each. Auditorium. Big gym. Big circular cafeteria. Big administration building. Right for vocational education.

In Tehran is a teacher training institution for vocational education called Tehran Institute of Technology. At insistence of the third man, it gives dual degrees in

teaching and engineering. So almost all of its students want to be engineers. Only five out of 20 want to go with an institution in the fall when it moves to Dardasht where it belongs, rather than transfer to technical engineering courses which remain in Tehran. A vocational high school is to be established at Dardasht too.

Thus, in the first year, the new facility at Dardasht, built for vocational education, will stand partly idle. It will be used only by a new Tehran Institute of Technology class of 100 and 200 high school students. It's built for about 1500. So, reasons the second man, let us transfer the teachers college, now housed in a rented hotel to Dardasht for next year. As the vocational school expands, using the magnificent shops as intended, the teachers college will withdraw. But will it, once the camel has his nose in the tent? Withdraw to where? Who knows? Perhaps new buildings. The third man wants the school to be vocational, engineers only. Put beds in the classrooms and tell the teachers college we have no room. Make it a boarding school. The second man wants it to be the place for the teachers college despite vocational layout. Not enough classrooms? 1/4 of a mile away is a new high school for the youth of the community, just being completed. The second man saw it on a visit to Dardasht a few days ago. We will take over this high school building for the college too. This will give us enough room.

It is June 8th. Dardasht vocational center stands in its place in the desert. Completed, each single shop costs \$200,000; there are eight shops. Each has top American and German machines installed. It opens in September. It has no director or student body yet. No one knows whether it will be a vocational center or the home of teachers college. The nearby high school, approaching completion, will open in the fall. It has no principal, no staff, and no student body. "We will take over this high school for the college too."

The first man, the minister, makes an announcement. "No decision will be made on Dardasht until we have the recommendations of the NYU team." The NYU team, learning to play Iranian, say, "But we are not building site experts." "We will await your pleasure," says the minister. "There is plenty of time."

## JUNE 13: THE FINAL REPORT

As he writes this letter, WVT continues to recover from his illness, and the team moves toward an agreement on its recommendations. *The difficulty is less that there are disagreements among ourselves; we have a fairly broad ideological base of agreements. The difficulty is instead that recommendations are hard to develop because of lack of money in Iran, the amazing lack of data and information, and the way one approach affects another. We had, for instance, an eminently sensible plan for training village teachers through a village curriculum in a rural setting for use in village schools. But the authorities say they have no money for building schools of this sort and have an excess of high school graduates for whom there isn't room in jobs and who must be used up somehow, preferably by mandatory assignment to teach in villages. But the high school graduates are city-bred, hate the idea of going*

to the villages, even hate the idea of teaching, have no village contacts or sympathy or insight. Those we interview and who advise us come to the recommendation that our suggestion is not workable. So far our recommendations on rural elementary, for instance, have gone through six drafts. We now have a proposal—till we meet the next analyst who will expose the flaw in this one too.

Herb works on recommendation conferences until he can absorb no more. His threshold is lower than John's by far, and mine to some degree. Then he says in the midst of discussion, "I've got to stop talking. I don't care what we decide anymore." So we adjourn for a few hours; then back to it. Looking back, I can see that our humor is technically called gallows or jailhouse humor. Herb stopped by and contributed some more. He told of a supervisor who told him the only thing this country can do is start all over again. Remind me someday to tell you about how we still haven't gotten our per diems and how they can't give us our tickets home because travel orders can only be ordered after a job is finished and we haven't finished our job, have we?

Here, in Tehran, I am really a cheerful appearing soul, a specialist in such humor as we have. The American hostesses like me for I am very charming and gracious. We have dined out at an American home Sunday and Monday nights. I am an excellent guest. I make excellent flat and quacking contributions to all conversation and save much faith. The only trouble is my heart isn't in it.

## JUNE 17: APPRECIATION

I think I may have been unfair to the Iranians in some of my earlier letters and this worries me for, if anything, I try to be a fair man so I will be constructive and look for the good in what is here. However, this may be a short letter. But I will start bravely. Iranians are kind and hospitable. They take you in and gorge you. They go shopping with you and bargain for you. They wait for you. So they also have infinite patience. They enjoy simple pleasures such as strolling the boulevard at dusk. You seem safe among them. No hoods claim turf as their own; no one talks or acts ugly. They walk slowly, breathe deeply, and endlessly they talk and talk and talk. They are often like children. They have humor. They laugh with you even if they don't quite understand. They smile readily. They like people. Good at rapport. They are unfailingly polite. So they do not drink. It is evil and the Koran forbids it. So some say about 10% of them take opium, but I see no evidence at all. All of us, from Huxley down, have our own versions of soma. They sometimes seem a bit confused. But who doesn't? I said they were patient. It's true. We take a car and visit somewhere for four hours. The drivers wait. They drive us home. They say thank you in broken English. They drive another American and wait. They get pushed around. So they develop techniques of adjustment. And these are so effective that the Barbarians get mad. And when we tell them of their techniques of adjustment, they agree and add politely that there is no hope for whatever for Iranians.

Is there hope for you, American? They never asked the question, at least not out loud; they sniff flowers, cultivate their gardens. Their walls are seven feet high which,

of course, is higher than Everest. Stay out. Do not even look in. Those who live in the villages want to live in the cities. Those who live in the cities want to live in Tehran. Those who live in Tehran want to live abroad. They best like wishful wishes; Reality spoils things. They must dream a lot. In their miniatures, old men are comforted by young girls. Their intellectuals regard life as a great joke that has been played on them. They enjoy telling the joke again and again and do not resent it. Some intellectuals are dedicated and intended to work hard for something they are sure will not come about. They are few, intense, and very Iranian. They like Americans. They enjoy their informality. They also think, and quite correctly, that some of the Americans are phonies. They have discovered that some Americans aren't competent. They laugh with delight when I say with mock seriousness we should invite you to America to be a foreign technician advising New York University on its program. They admire our hard work. The pages which Americans cover with words! We wonder they are a successful people, not like us, the poor lost Iranians.

Their skies are blue. Their days follow a pattern and seldom change. They talk on. Tomorrow has always come and will tomorrow too. Birth and death are part of Allah's will. Enjoy the day; smell the rose; smile; pretend you know more of Hafiz and Saadi than you do, for it will do no harm. Make your street cries melodious and people may buy. Blanket the newcomer; absorb him; do not resent him. Live for the day. Tomorrow comes but is not yet real. Things here are very old. We are an old civilization. We do not amount to much but we survive. We may even be here tomorrow after bombs. But it would be nice to live in your country. So rich. Such new things to see. And we would not have to work hard. People sit at desks and earn great sums.

Not so short a letter after all.

## JUNE 25: AND NOW...

And now we come to my truly last long letter from Iran. For now our work has reached its culmination, at least its Iranian culmination within Iran. And from being by standards and observers of the wheels within wheels within wheels, from being those who stand on the brink watching others struggle in chaos, we ourselves become one of the wheels, we ourselves get pulled into the murky convolutions of chaos. For now we make our recommendations and we tumble into the pit of academic international politics.

How does one report from Chaos? He can't report how to get out, for no one in Chaos truly knows, that being one of the better definitions of Chaos. But at least he has some recollection of how he fell, jumped or was pushed in, as the coroner's report puts it.

In the beginning there was the word. So let's start with the contract. It was wrought in the USA, somewhere in the bowels of the great digestive system of New York University and Washington bureaucracy. It was wrought, no doubt, by a good American citizen, or committee of citizens, who had never seen Iran and who write

*pure English. Yet the contract is written in the most delightful Iranian. It would please the heart of any good Iranian who is attempting successfully to be all things to all men.*

*Our contract plainly says that we as a survey team are to do three quite different and mutually contradictory things. Clear? As an advance party, we need only explore the territory lightly and always be sure that we so proceed as to clear the way for the in-depth approach which follows upon our scouting. But interpretation 2 says there are four specific areas in the wide realm of teacher education that we conquered completely and report on sagely. But interpretation 3 reveals the survey team as Superman conquering the total picture of teacher education in its entirety, missing no nook nor cranny, rendering the judgment of Solomon, and the devil take the advance party concept.... What happens when one force in the complex of forces expects one to follow one interpretation and another force expects another interpretation and a third plays sphinx? Always the apple in Eden.*

*Back home at the ranch, uncle Andy and uncle George and all our little cousins of the New York University happy family are licking their chops and waiting for us to bring home the bacon. To them we are a brave scouting party, inspecting the terrain, avoiding ambushes, at all costs clearing the way for the coming NYU invasion.*

*But come now gentlemen!... Are we not scholars? Are we not dedicated to the truth? Shall we not speak out? And if a contract is not forthcoming, why then the devil with it! But softly, gentlemen. Thus thinking, the scouting party approached the passes and the potential ambushes.*

*The strategy was clear. Watch out for the Iranians. Play Solomon, yet be reasonable with their viewpoints. After all, it is their country. Remember? Onward group process!*

*Out of a pass came Taslimi. He's the deputy minister who looks like Harpo and talks like an American. It's a hung jury on whether he practices what he preaches. At two long conferences we explain our views, all to our basic principles, make concessions on smaller points in the name of realism. And Taslimi joins us. He becomes Tonto, the good Indian. We have a love feast.*

*But hark! Out of the pass comes another deputy, Nafisi. He's the one who combines Farley and Kennedy and could charm an Eskimo into installing air conditioning at the North Pole. He explains that we have neglected him, that he has seen many of us only socially. So we give him two days and he shows us his fortifications. He has a strange penchant for building magnificent buildings with good equipment and he trains no teachers who know how to keep people in his buildings or know what it is to do with his equipment. We skirmish. He retires back into the hills to think some more. He may be neutralized; He's not sure; We are not sure.*

*We proceed cautiously into the mountains, bravely showing our tentative recommendations to Iranians we encounter. Sometimes we have confused skirmishes but*

*there is no real favoritism shown by the Iranians and fortunately we have Tonto with us on our side.*

*We enter a deep defile. The noise of powerful forces! We look up alarmed. But joy quickly spreads. Riding toward us on their powerful steeds come our allies, the Americans, the AIDS education professionals of Iran. Support has come to us. Victory is ours! NYU, the contract and the truth forever! Viva USA. Oh say can you see?*

*At the head of the column, wearing his Mounties uniform is General Hendershot. At his right, out of a Nelson Eddy operetta, is Dave Laird. In the ranks are our buddies with whom we have been eating, drinking, traveling. Good old dawn of business education! Good old art of trades and industry!*

*But something strange is happening. Bullets began whizzing by us. We warily look about for hidden Iranians. Then the horrid truth dawns. The American AID troops are shooting at us, their own people! They invited us originally to take part in this war. They housed and equipped us. We are buddies. These are our boys! What the hell?*

*We take to the hills and escape under the cover of night. We regroup our thin, pitifully ragged band. We try to figure it out. Why this rigorous, slashing, intolerant attack on our most basic recommendations? Why, of all things this sharp assault by Hendershot who initiated the treaty, even the sacred first contract, that brought these peer conscripts to this barren land?*

*I have a revelation. Back home on the AID international ranch there is a new boss, Macy. Macy has changed the party line. Out the window with NYU. Let us build a Persian Empire through AID troops alone. So Hendershot must change with the party line. The easiest way to justify the shift? Easy. The recommendations are no good. The report is no good. We don't need NYU. And what happens to us back at our ranch when we don't bring back the bacon for the hungry chaps? And that precious bubble, reputation?*

*Our suspicion darkens as Hendershot, under a flag of truce, comes to visit our camp and blasts the recommendations. Treason? Benedict Arnold! We fight gallantly and wearily, a tired little band. The truth—I use the word timidly, for here truth is slippery—begins to appear as to why the American AID attacks, not aids, its loyal ally. They believe the gallant scouts are too conservative, not bold enough in recommendations. Naturally we disagree. We are steering, we honestly believe, a way that reconciles boldness and realism. Also there is our old friend semantics. We want village youth to teach village people through a village-oriented curriculum.*

*We say it is bold. They say it is conservative. This is probably the country and the place in which to point out that one man's need is another man's Persian.*

*We were on the watch out for Iranians. So we wrote to them and in their language and step by step we would have a fighting chance for implementation. We didn't write for American consumption. But General Hendershot says that if we are to give him a weapon he can use, it must be written for Americans too, with long*

*explanations of backgrounds of education in Iran and the findings of the team and many and so forth. And if not, no contract. The general has a large gun there.*

*So under a flag of truce and tired from the long fight and the surprise attack, we try to gather more data to shape back at the ranch, in overtime no doubt. Meanwhile we met a whole passel of Iranians today at Dry Gulch, the ministry. We gave them our recommendations. They reacted impassively as the Sphinx. Tonto wasn't with them. He had disappeared.*

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