

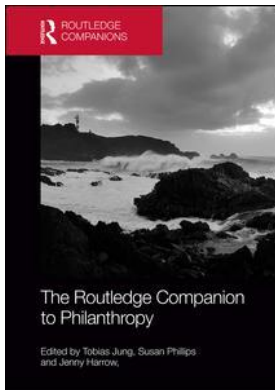
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The multi-layered history of Western philanthropy

Hugh Cunningham

Historians increasingly write about philanthropy as a gift relationship. Alan Kidd (1996: 184), for example, describes philanthropy as

non-commercial social transfers of wealth, material objects or non-material assistance rendered in forms that are culturally meaningful and that generate moral relationships between individuals or groups such as solidarity, dependence, legitimacy, and reputability.

The history of philanthropy, however, is not simply a history of giving, far less one of giving only by the rich; it requires us to examine the various sides of the relationship. This brings it into close engagement with many other branches of history: class, gender, national identity and empire, religion and missions, poor relief and welfare, wealth and taxation, civil society. All these, and others, touch on philanthropy.

In this synopsis, I argue that historians of philanthropy need to think like geologists. Stop the clock at any time, say 1850 in Europe, and you will find strata, or layers, of philanthropic giving accumulated on top of each other. The philanthropy of the past leaves its material record, its buildings, its legal documents, its charitable gifts, its assumptions and practices, in layer after layer. The present adds a topsoil of the latest projects, but the lower layers continue to exercise their influence, sometimes in the form of outcrops from earlier ages of giving.

The strata of philanthropy

First stratum: Ancient Greece

Excavators of the first stratum focus on ancient Greece and seize on Aristotle (384–322 BCE), who wrote that to give money ‘to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, with the right aim in view, and in the right way – that is not something anyone can do, nor is it easy’ (Aristotle, 2000: 35). Twenty-first-century philanthropists love to quote this: philanthropy, it seems to say, is not easy, but to engage in it has the sanction of ancient wisdom. In fact Aristotle was exploring how to achieve a mean between wastefulness and stinginess; for him the truly virtuous person, in the words of Roger Crisp, ‘is unlikely to stir himself to help the vulnerable’ (Aristotle, 2000: xviii).

The Greek word *philanthropia* originally referred to the relationship of the gods to humans; it came to be applied to rulers who were generous to their subjects, and then to the wealthy more generally. It incorporated the notion of a return, *philanthropon*, from the recipients in the form of honours heaped on the donor: it was a form of gift exchange, a quid-pro-quo (Hands, 1968: 35–7; 80). Often, it referred to a relationship between wealthy individuals, indicative of a cast of mind as much as the conferring of a gift. The fourth century philosopher Themistius, for example, thought it ‘ridiculous ... to attest to love of mankind in a weaver or a carpenter who has a mean dwelling, and scarcely leaves his house through weariness and lack of leisure’ (Finn, 2006: 215). Philanthropy was given a new twist by early Christians, but, as a term, it soon disappeared from view before re-emerging in the late eighteenth century.

Second stratum: Early Christianity

The second stratum is made up of the teachings of the Bible and of the early Christian Fathers, of their interpretation from the twelfth century onwards, and of the medieval world of giving. At their root was a sense of justice, that the poor should be relieved by the rich. The Christian Fathers argued that all property belonged to all men. According to the preachings of the influential theologian Basil of Casesarea (329–379 CE), if God was the great philanthropist, Christians should imitate ‘God’s *philanthropia* by both taking pity and sharing things out and being generous with favours’ (Finn, 2006: 236). In the Middle Ages, from the centres of intellectual activity in Paris, Rome and Bologna, ideas and teachings about giving circulated throughout Europe, progressively simplified as they descended the social scale. The stress was on the obligations of the rich. In the words of Robert of Flamborough’s thirteenth century penitential *Liber Poenitentialis*, ‘whoever does not receive guests in his home, as God has ordained, nor give alms, if he makes no amends by bread and water for an equivalent period, let him do penance’ (Rubin, 1987: 62). Alms giving was itself a form of penance. As Bartholomew of Exeter pointed out: ‘alms extinguish sins’ (Rubin, 1987: 64). The poor should know, it was said in the mid-twelfth century, ‘that in alms they receive the sins of men, and also that they can reciprocate by offering prayers in return’ (Rubin, 1987: 83). The pressure to give was heightened by the growing belief from the later twelfth century in purgatory as the place where most people would go, and suffer, after death. The length of time to be spent in purgatory, and the degree of suffering to be undergone, could be lessened by prayer: ‘[m]en of property were expected to give to the church and to the poor, during life and at death, both to justify their inequitable status in the social hierarchy and to buy prayers for their own souls’ (Rosenthal, 1972: 8). Mary of Bassingbourn, for example, gave an endowment in 1301 to an Augustinian priory which had to maintain four regular canons to pray for Mary’s soul and for the souls of her two husbands and her parents, but in addition she provided for an almshouse for seven poor and infirm men and for distributions of food to 1,000 poor people on three occasions every year (Rubin, 1987: 249).

If there was an obligation to give, it was also increasingly argued that it should be done with discrimination. Early systematic teachings of canon law, as illustrated by the Summa *‘Elegantius in iure divino’* (c. 1169), asserted that

In almsgiving there should be distinction between people. You had better give to your own than to strangers, to the sick rather than to the healthy, to ashamed rather than aggressive beggars, to the have-not rather than to him that has, and amongst the needy, first to the just and then to the unjust. That is ordered charity.

(Rubin, 1987: 70)

The distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor, with a long and unfinished history ahead of it, was in place. From the thirteenth century onwards there was particular merit, it was felt, in giving to the shame-faced poor, those who had fallen into poverty from previous comfort. The donor's motives, however, as much as the worthiness of the recipient, gave merit to an act of giving (Rubin, 1987).

The experience of Italian cities helps to capture the scale and reach of late medieval charity. It was 'chiefly intended for the respectable, the innocent, and the holy' (Pullan, 1988: 181). Hospital building had taken off in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By 1383, there were twenty-one in Genoa alone, some housing and caring for the elderly, others founding hospitals for abandoned babies. Confraternities, perhaps best seen as mutual aid self-help organizations, began to proliferate in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By 1521, Venice had at least 120 small confraternities and five large ones. In the middle years of the fifteenth century, cities began to build great hospitals, partly to bring some coherence and order to a charitable world where there were too many institutions with overlapping missions. They also began to develop the micro-credit schemes known as *Monti di Pietà*, making small loans to the worthy poor (Pullan, 1988).

Third stratum: The Middle Ages

The third stratum originated in the later Middle Ages and was dominant until the late nineteenth century. The socio-economic fact underlying it was the existence of poverty among a substantial proportion of the population. Finding that about one-third of the population of mid-eighteenth century Florence applied for public poor relief, a percentage similar to that in England, Peter Laslett (1988: 164) concluded that 'Everything points to the existence within European traditional societies of a sizeable block of the population looking to the collectivity to get by'. In famines or epidemics, one-third of the population might rise to half (Pullan, 1988: 178). Some of this poverty was of a kind prominently known to the Middle Ages: the poverty of the elderly, of widows, of the sick, of children. On top of this, there was poverty among men of working age. In face of the endemic problem of poverty, the belief that the poor were closer to Christ than the rich was less frequently voiced. On the contrary, it was their idleness, their fecklessness, their immorality, which impressed itself. Extensive poor relief strategies were adopted, and charity became inextricably bound up with them.

In the administration of poor relief, the distinction between private donations and state funding, so fundamental to modern thinking, made little sense. 'The mixed economy of welfare', the phrase widely used by historians to describe both the source of funding and the agency of control in poor relief measures, draws attention to the blurring of boundaries. In England, '[m] any private gifts and bequests were administered directly by local officials' (McIntosh, 1988: 212). The innovation in England at the beginning of the seventeenth century of taxing people to pay for poor relief was sometimes described as charity; the Poor Law and the Charitable Uses Act both, and not coincidentally, date from 1601. In Italy, the words for poor relief and charity were used interchangeably (Cavallo, 1998: 110). The *Société Philanthropique de Bruxelles* (1828) was founded by private initiative, subsidized by local government, and had the mayor of Brussels as its president (Dekker, 1998: 133–4). No one could say where the private ended and the public began.

Poor relief could be granted for a variety of reasons, some of them far from obviously philanthropic. Marco van Leeuwen (1994) has argued that there was a 'logic of charity'. On the part of elites, and the same might also be said of the bourgeoisie, poor relief could help to: regulate the labour market; stabilize the social order; avert turmoil; reduce the risk of infection; civilize the poor; affirm their own status; forward a career and a web of patronage; and promote one's

own salvation. Sandra Cavallo (1991) has stressed, with special reference to Turin, that giving was often a way of deepening the ties of family and of patronage, and thereby of exercising power. There was nothing new in this. In fifteenth century Florence, 'charity and patronage became almost indistinguishable' (Henderson, 1994: 424). It was no accident that there was increasing emphasis on confining eligibility for charity to those born in a particular city. In the rituals that accompanied giving, there was a high quotient of symbolic action that reinforced a particular notion of social order, and giving was marked by much rivalry between institutions, social actors and power blocs. Need, in any kind of objective measurement, did not determine the level or direction of charity. The poor had to use a range of survival strategies, including pawning, migration, begging, prostitution, crime, revolt, formation of mutual societies and accepting poor relief; turning to charity was by no means the first avenue they explored, nor did it ever enjoy exclusive preference.

Charity, then, was a site where power was exercised and negotiated, the poor being the weaker party but not without some bargaining strength. The poor knew that they needed to adopt special forms of words and body language if they wanted help. Letters had to be written for entry to almshouses, a letter-writer perhaps employed to undertake the task. For example, a Joan Young, applying for admission to the almshouse at Bruton in Somerset, described herself as

a very indigent disconsolate widow full of years and necessities almost blind and impotent unable to get a penny towards her subsistence widowed with nothing but misery and sadness [who] unless supported by the hand of charity will necessarily perish.

(Hindle, 2004: 160)

It ticked the right boxes: moving and at the same time mildly threatening to those who might be tempted not to lift the hand of charity (Hindle, 2004: 160).

From around 1520, an international movement for welfare reform can be identified across Europe (Davis, 1987: 51–2). As part of this, and of fundamental importance, there was a decisive shift from charitable action initiated and controlled by the church to one where laymen were the dominant force. This did not mean that Christianity ceased to be a vital force in the world of charity, rather, that charity shifted its focus from giving to religious causes to attending to 'the secular needs of humanity', and that laymen were conspicuous in its funding and organization (Jordan, 1959: 17). As Cissie Fairchilds (1976: 21) has expressed it, 'the merchants of almost every major town in Western Europe began in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to establish new charities, which they, and not the Church, would control'. Brian Pullan (1988: 200), while stressing continuity from the past, has described this as a 'new philanthropy', the first of a number of 'new philanthropies'. The central text of this new approach was *De Subventionem Pauperum*. Written in 1526 by the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, this two-volume tract on the private and public relief of poverty was initially addressed to the Consuls and Senate of Bruges, but soon enjoyed Europe-wide renown. While Vives' argument for a stronger role for secular authorities in welfare reform challenged the authority of the Church, the tract simultaneously provided an acceptable theological grounding for his argument, as well as practical guidance on how to approach such reform (Spicker, 2010). For example, in the first chapter of his second volume Vives noted how 'The young children of the poor are villainously brought up, they [mothers] and their sons lying outside the churches or wandering round begging' (Cunningham, 2005: 116). The perceived solution to the problem was to place these children in institutions. Sometimes existing hospitals for poor or abandoned children were taken over and measures to improve discipline enacted, usually with the provision of education for the brighter ones. In due course, the boys might be apprenticed, and dowries paid for the girls. This was

Christian humanism in action, instilling discipline, offering the possibility of advancement, lay-controlled, but suffused with a religious ethos, whether Protestant or Catholic (Cunningham, 2005: 116–17).

This third stratum is often associated with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. In the historiography of philanthropy, the Protestant/Catholic divide was until the 1960s the focus of attention. Thereafter, social historians downplayed the divide, pointing to similar responses between Protestants and Catholics to what was seen as an extended economic and social crisis that pre-dated the Reformation. Recently, however, the distinctiveness, both of Protestant attitudes and actions and of Counter-Reformation responses, has been urged. Luther, it is argued, preceded Vives in proposing radical reforms in the administration of relief. He was particularly critical of Catholic mendicant orders and religious confraternities whose voluntary poverty displaced attention from the real poverty of the poor. Nuremberg and other towns in Germany had already poor relief reforms in place in the early 1520s. The attempt to eliminate begging and to make a clear distinction between the deserving and the undeserving all bear the mark of Protestant thinking and action (Grell, 1997: 45–9). Protestant thinking about the poor, moreover, spread rapidly across national boundaries, often carried by refugees. In London, the Dutch Reformed and other churches became ‘not only a model for English Puritans, but were widely admired by those within the Church of England who had little sympathy for Calvinism’ (Grell and Cunningham, 1997: 9).

In Protestant countries, the predominant catechism made it clear that good works did not contribute to salvation, but should be seen as a sign of thankfulness to God (Ben-Amos, 2008: 246–7). Sensitive to criticism that they had dismantled Catholic forms of charity, Protestants responded in part by their approach to giving, in part by ceremonies of extravagant praise for benefactors (Archer, 2002; Ben-Amos, 2008). For example, Jordan (1959: 250–1) celebrated the levels of giving in Protestant England up to 1660. Although his figures have subsequently been revised downwards, there is no denying the scale of giving, nor its focus on poor relief, either directly, or indirectly by promoting education or schemes of social rehabilitation; it amounted to at least three-quarters of all giving.

In Catholic countries, following the Council of Trent and the ideals of the Counter-Reformation it embodied, the lead was taken by the Church. Faced with very similar social problems to those in countries that had turned Protestant, numerous orders of monks and nuns set about the task of promoting public morality, of Christianizing the masses, and of distributing food to the deserving. Grell and Cunningham (2002: 3) have concluded that in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation

The Northern, Protestant, countries came to be characterised by schemes predominantly initiated by local and central governments, while the southern, Catholic, parts of Europe in particular witnessed a reinvigoration of confessional institutions and the creation of new lay and clerical orders dedicated to the poor and the sick.

Early modern charity was proud to be in the public eye. It was urban and it was promoted as an adornment of any town or city. It was an inducement to the poor to migrate from the countryside – only England, with its parish-based poor law from the beginning of the seventeenth century, offered much help to the rural poor. Once the poor, and particularly their children, became inmates of institutions, they became enmeshed in a philanthropic world which was dependent for funds and reputation on public display. Funerals, certainly in Catholic countries, became the major sites of display. In Paris, the children of the key institutions were, as Ariès (1981: 165–8) put it, ‘specialists in death’; in Castile, the Colleges of the Niños de la

Doctrina, which housed, clothed and fed poor boys, taught them reading and writing, and instructed them in Christianity, also required them to accompany funeral processions, their presence there, amongst other things, a means of raising money (Martz, 1983).

Fourth stratum: Associations

Over the course of the roughly 350 years (1520–1870) during which charity and poor relief were virtually coterminous, there emerged three distinctive new strata with a long life ahead of them. The first, our fourth stratum, originated in England in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historians in the early twentieth century described what happened as ‘associated philanthropy’. Instead of there being a multiplicity of individual one-off acts of giving, people came together to promote a cause they believed in: they formed societies, they funded themselves through annual subscriptions from members, the latter having the right to elect the governors of the charity; they published annual reports. These initiatives in organizational form bore a similarity to the contemporaneous development of financial institutions in the City of London, especially joint-stock companies. The causes they were drawn to in the late seventeenth century were the establishment of charity schools, the provision of employment, in part through the building of workhouses, and the formation of Societies for the Reformation of Manners. If, from one angle, they look like an outpouring of organized Christian zeal, from another they seem primarily concerned with social control. The same could be said of a key development of the eighteenth century: the establishment of hospitals. A concern for health had to fight for prominence against a range of other purposes, that it was thought a hospital could serve. These are neatly encapsulated in the title of a sermon delivered in 1746: ‘Hospitals and Infirmaries Considered as Schools of Christian Education for the Adult Poor: and as a Means Conducive Towards a National Reformation in the Common Peoples’ (Fissell, 1991: 84).

These new subscription charitable organizations can be seen as initiating what is now often described as the ‘voluntary’ or ‘nonprofit’ sector. The promoters of all these efforts were dominantly from the mercantile class, with men like Thomas Coram of Foundling Hospital fame and Jonas Hanway, being the mainspring behind many later initiatives. Retiring early from business, they devoted themselves to the public good. They received due recognition, Coram a portrait by Hogarth, Hanway a memorial in Westminster Abbey (Andrew, 1989). The new hospitals described themselves as ‘voluntary’. They were carving out a role for themselves that was independent of both state and church, and they were run by unpaid volunteers. Even doctors who worked in them did so without receiving any fee, though the prestige and networking that accrued to them was often more than adequate compensation.

More importantly, the hospitals received no money directly from the state, though some from Poor Law Guardians who sent patients to them. They were, it can be argued, laying the foundations of ‘civil society’.

Civil society was also evident in Hamburg where the establishment of the General Poor Relief in 1788 was the outcome of over twenty years of reforming effort. It reinvigorated the campaign against begging, it looked for ways to get paupers back into work, but above all it was marked by a recognition that, as Johann Georg Büsch (1801), a leading political theorist in late eighteenth century Germany, put it, ‘the common man earns too little to live on’ (cited in Lindemann, 2002: 138). A growing city like Hamburg, its population swollen by migrants whose livelihoods were dependent on the ups and downs of global trade, required, ‘a restructuring of charity’, ‘a new type of philanthropy’, one that was responsive to the need to get workers who fell ill back into work. Poor relief began to extend beyond paupers (Lindemann, 2002). The emphasis was on providing medical relief in the home with domiciliary visits to the poor by doctors and other

volunteers, themselves inspired by humanitarianism and a service ethic. The ideas and practices generated in Hamburg spread to other German towns, and although the escalating expense led to much debate on the merits of the system, domiciliary visiting of the poor remained a crucial element of philanthropic action through the nineteenth century (Lindemann, 2002). Given powerful backing by French philanthropist and philosopher Joseph Marie de Gérando in his 1820 examination of charitable activity, *Le Visiteur du Pauvre*, it was 'adopted as the standard mould of nineteenth century voluntary charity' (Woolf, 1986: 104). Initiatives in one town soon spread. If Hamburg provided a template for a new philanthropy in the late eighteenth century, there were others equally prominent in the nineteenth century. Notable examples included the Scottish city of Glasgow under the reforming impact of Thomas Chalmers in the 1830s and 1840s, and the German town Elberfeld from the mid-century onwards. Both built on the Hamburg model, dividing up the city into welfare districts, emphasizing personal supervision of recipients and the removal of any right to relief.

Fifth stratum: Re-emergence of 'philanthropy'

The fifth stratum becomes identifiable towards the end of the eighteenth century: it ceases to be anachronistic to write about 'philanthropy'. Francis Bacon in the early seventeenth century had equated what 'the Grecians call *philanthropia* with 'goodness ... affecting of the weal of men', but the word only became widely used with the Enlightenment (Sulek, 2010: 194–5). Like the revolution to come, it was French, and it reflected a powerful strand of anti-clericalism in French society, a strong critique of existing charities, and an optimistic belief that in a well-ordered society human beings would throw off the chains, both physical and psychical, that restricted them. The background to it was a collapse in donations through wills to existing charities, and increasing socio-economic pressures (Jones, 1982). The foundation of the Société Philanthropique de Paris in 1780, though it had little impact in its first five years, was a landmark. In a 1787 manifesto, it declared that philanthropic activity was the main duty of a citizen (Duprat, 1993: 68). Hitherto, charitable giving had been incited by the belief that it was a duty incumbent on Christians. Now it became, as it remains, the mark of true citizenship. The Société Philanthropique was not a total break with the past, far from it: it became in the nineteenth century the repository of conservative attitudes. Nevertheless, this late eighteenth century moment effectively marks the beginning of 'philanthropy' as something which might be distinguished from 'charity'.

Philanthropy crossed the Channel from France to England in the 1780s. The first person in England to be described as a philanthropist was John Howard who toured, and reported on, prisons and similar institutions in Britain and Europe, urging reform. In 1786, he became 'John Howard, the philanthropist', seen as a lover of humankind, more famous for the 42,033 miles that he calculated he had traveled than for any money he might have given. It was in the 1780s, too, that Robert Young, long-resident in France, returned to his native England, and was there instrumental in founding the Philanthropic Society to reform young criminals or those in danger of becoming so. For many years, it looked as if philanthropy would be located on the left of the political spectrum. '[E]very philanthropist should be a reformer', wrote the Unitarian George Dyer (1795: 35–6), echoed by the historian Graham John Barker-Benfield (2003: 73) for whom 'from the latter eighteenth century, reform and philanthropy were nearly interchangeable'. Mutualist societies wore the philanthropic label. The Philanthropic Society of House Carpenters and Joiners in Newcastle in 1812, for example, was a mutual aid society, dedicated 'upon all just occasions to assist and support each other'. In 1818, the first attempt to form a union of all trades unions was called 'The Philanthropic Hercules' (Postgate, 1923: 19, 33).

This radicalism of philanthropy soon died away. Philanthropy began to align itself with the dominant social and economic ideology of the time, political economy. Political economists preached market solutions to social problems. They were above all concerned that wages should be determined by the market. Earning a living through wages was fundamental both to a successful economy and to personal morality. Charity in its old forms, political economists argued, undermined that, and political economists were hard to ignore. In England in 1824, one writer reflected on the impact that political economy had made:

To convince the public, twenty or thirty years ago, of the goodness of a charity, it was sufficient to shew that the objects relieved were in a state of real distress.... But now, that the circumstances are more generally known, on which the condition of the labouring classes depends, all former reasonings on the subject of charity ... are invalidated.... The condition of the labouring classes with regard to the necessaries and comforts of life, is evidently determined by the rate of wages.

(Coats, 1973: 99)

Nothing did more harm, it was said in 1815, than 'the misplaced benevolence of the charitable and humane' (Coats, 1973: 121).

This was an attack on charity and on that much-heralded eighteenth century virtue, 'benevolence'. In the 1820s, claims were made for 'philanthropy' as the means by which political economy could set bounds to unlimited charity. Teaching the poor 'the knowledge of the laws which regulate wages', it was said, '... depends in a great measure upon the exertions of enlightened philanthropists' (Coats, 1973: 113). Thirty years later, the message was still being drummed home: once the principles of political economy were firmly established, 'our kindly impulses ... will cast off the lazy shape of charity, and rise into the attitude and assume the garb of true philanthropy' (Coats, 1973: 88). Philanthropy and political economy, it seemed, were to be allies against 'the lazy shape of charity'. By the 1860s, however, there were mutterings about 'a misguided and sanguine philanthropy', about philanthropy being 'misdirected' (Coats, 1973: 454-5). Philanthropy seemed to be no better than the charity or benevolence from which it was trying to emancipate itself.

If nagging doubts had entered some parts of the philanthropic world by mid-century, other parts of it proclaimed confidence in what they were doing. Inheriting from the Enlightenment a belief in the transformative power of well-run institutions, they focused their attention on the young, and in particular on young males who seemed likely to go astray. Criminality and its prevention lay at the heart of much early philanthropy: in George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, set in the 1830s, it is said of Mr. Casaubon that 'he doesn't care much about the philanthropic side of things; punishments, and that kind of thing' (Eliot, 1965: 77). It was a feature of this concern with crime and punishment that it was international in nature. The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, formed in 1786, was closely linked through Benjamin Rush, Founding Father of the US, with people with similar concerns in England, notably the Quaker doctor and philanthropist, John Coakley Lettson, and the aforementioned prison reformer John Howard. By personal correspondence, which then found its way into friendly newspapers, reformers on one side of the Atlantic kept themselves informed of initiatives on the other. The London Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline, formed in 1816, was open about its indebtedness to Philadelphia. The men involved in these exchanges had wide interests, extending, for example, to opposition to slavery, and they were filled with enthusiasm for what Rush called 'the extension of the empire of humanity'. William Allen, another Quaker, was a central figure in these international networks, publishing

The Philanthropist, a periodical designed to ‘stimulate to virtue and active benevolence’ (Lloyd and Burgoyne, 1998).

This tradition of sharing experience and good practice was given a Continental European dimension with the foundation of the Rauhes Haus, or ‘rough house’, near Hamburg by Johann Hinrich Wichern in 1833. This was aimed at providing shelter and support for poor boys. The Rauhes Haus, in its turn, inspired the foundation in France in 1840 of the agrarian colony of Mettray, near Tours. Dutch, English and Belgian philanthropists flocked to Mettray and copied it. This ‘philanthropic tourism’ (Dekker, 1998), was a notable feature of philanthropy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Across Europe, though in different forms in different countries, there was ‘a firm conviction that *their* nation could be transformed by means of philanthropy’ (Dekker, 1998).

The degree of faith in the reforming potential of institutions is best exemplified in the building of asylums in the US after 1830. By 1850, there were twenty-seven public and private institutions caring for children in New York State. In the country as a whole, the seventy-seven private orphanages of 1851 had increased to 613 by 1880, with a further 474 founded over the ensuing twenty years. By then, there was a counter-blast to placing children in particular in what came to be described as ‘barracks’. Americans coined the word ‘institutionalized’ to describe a child who was ‘mechanical and helpless from the effect of asylum life’ (Cunningham, 2005: 150). What followed in response were in part attempts to improve domestic institutions, to organise them on a smaller scale, but also in part a new major experiment in social engineering, the emigration of children from the environment of the city to the countryside, that countryside often being on the other side of the world: American East coast children were taken to the Mid-West, British children shipped to Canada and later to Australia (Cunningham, 2005: 148–52).

This belief, that children thrived only in the countryside, reflected another aspect of philanthropic change in the nineteenth century. Until then, it had been reasonably assumed that the prime purpose and function of philanthropy was to shift resources from the rich to the poor. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the target of philanthropy shifted from the poor to the town or city. Of course, the poor constituted a large part of the urban ‘problem’, but they were not the whole of it. Philanthropists began to think that they could best improve their societies by providing their cities with a civic infrastructure of public parks, art galleries, museums, concert halls and libraries. It was one of the attractions of this form of philanthropy that it escaped the censure of political economists; another that the benefactor’s name often became attached to the donation. It was linked, too, to another novelty of nineteenth century philanthropy, an early example of what we now call ‘social enterprise’, the attempt to relieve housing problems by five percent philanthropy – an investment in building new apartment blocks for the respectable working class that would have the distinct attraction of bringing the donor a five percent return. This belief in the civilizing impact of cultural institutions, in his case libraries, reached its height in the work of the Scot who emigrated and made a fortune in the US, Andrew Carnegie.

In 1869, the English feminist, Josephine Butler, distinguished between feminine and masculine forms of philanthropy, the latter marked by ‘large and comprehensive measures, organizations and systems planned by men and sanctioned by Parliament’ (Simey, 1992: 78). If these masculine forms dominated publicity as they do much history, it was nevertheless the case that the distinctive feminine forms of philanthropy had profound social and political consequences. It was not simply that women vastly outnumbered men in charitable activity, important though that was: in 1893, it was estimated that half a million women in England worked ‘continuously and semi-professionally’ in philanthropy (Prochaska, 1980:224–5). Perhaps more significant in the long term, middle-class women found in philanthropy a space where they had a degree of autonomy

and an ability to influence outcomes, creating what Kathleen McCarthy (2003) has described as ‘parallel power structures’ to those of men. In the US, the outcome was that welfare measures focused on the needs of women and children rather than, as in Europe, of men.

Sixth stratum: Global missionary philanthropy

If philanthropy at its outset was secular in outlook, this was not to last. Christians were soon attracted to the ambition and optimism that inspired philanthropy and brought their own distinctive approach to the aim of regenerating society. Whereas secular philanthropists predominantly focused their attention on home soil, evangelical Christians had the world in their sights: this forms the sixth stratum. There were earlier forerunners, not least in Latin America, but it was from the late eighteenth century onwards that ‘global missionary philanthropy’ (Twells, 2008) came close to being a reality. The long-standing sense that relief to the poor should be prioritized on those born and bred in the locality gave way, not without controversy, to a belief that there was both an opportunity and a duty to bring the benefits of Christianity and civilization to the ‘heathen’ overseas. Which should come first, Christianity or civilization, was much debated, but that the two were intimately connected was not in doubt. Missions gained a previously lacking legitimacy by adopting some of the optimistic language of the Enlightenment and of philanthropy: the Bible, according to a Dutch pamphlet of 1801, contained ‘the true grounds and rules of civilization’ and knowledge of it had to be spread by Protestant Europeans, ‘the principal members of the great household of humanity’ (van Eijnatten, 2000). In Britain, simultaneously forging an empire, the 1790s was an important decade: the Baptist Missionary Society sent a mission to India in 1792, the London Missionary Society set itself up in Tahiti, Tongatapu and Marquesas in 1796, and, by the end of the decade, the Methodists and the Church Missionary Society were in West Africa. The British initiative was soon taken up by Protestants in other countries, Americans, Germans, Danes, Swedes and Norwegians. The Roman Catholic Church, battered by the assaults on it in the French Revolution, was slower in the field, but by the 1830s was making its mark (Neill, 1986: 214, 335–8). It is arguable that Christian missions form no part of philanthropy, but the counter-argument, that out of funds that came primarily from the West, they were expanding education and health, as well as proselytizing, is a powerful one. Missions were ‘diverting much of [Britain’s] charity to religious causes overseas’ (Porter, 1999: 244). In the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War, secular versions of global philanthropy set themselves up alongside the missionary ones.

Seventh stratum: Philanthropy as gap filler

A seventh stratum in the history of philanthropy surfaced in the later nineteenth century, eventually disconnecting the intimacy of the link between philanthropy and poor relief. The state, it began to be argued with increasing force, was better placed than philanthropy to resolve the social and cultural problems that beset so many lives. If philanthropy in the nineteenth century had to pitch itself in relation to political economy, by the twentieth century, it was doing so also in relation to the state. In the nineteenth century, the mixed economy of welfare had allowed a growth of both state and philanthropic initiatives. Neither was without criticism, what the British called ‘grand-motherly legislation’ as much as philanthropy. What was new by the end of the century was that the state was poised to intrude into areas that had hitherto been the preserve of philanthropy. Philanthropy, it was argued, was patchy in its coverage, condescending in its attitudes and with insufficient resources for the scale of the problems thrown up by urban and industrial society. Many rejected it on democratic and socialist grounds. If the political

economists who had so scared philanthropists can be seen as on the right of the political spectrum, those who championed the role of the state were on the left. A pincer movement was strangling philanthropy, or at least many forms of it.

The intrusion of the state deeply worried many who were closely engaged in the relief of poverty. In retrospect, however, the emergence of a new way of coping with poverty was as striking as the expanding role of the state. Across the western world, there spread an understanding of the circumstances that produced poverty and of a means of diminishing it. The risks associated with stages of the life cycle, unemployment and ill-health could be calculated, insurance could be taken out to mitigate them. Legislation often made insurance compulsory. Who paid for the insurance differed widely, but normally employees, employers and the state all contributed.

The outcome was that philanthropy as the solution to poverty was seen as playing a role secondary to, and separate from, the state. The public/private divide, impossible to disentangle for most of philanthropy's centuries, now came to be thought of central importance. Philanthropy might pioneer new approaches for the state later to adopt, it might try to fill the gaps which the state did not cover, it might, and increasingly did, run services on behalf of, and financed by, the state, but it was not, and no longer aspired to be, the lead actor. Some people began to ask whether it had any future role. Others, like Elizabeth Macadam in Britain (1934), talked up a 'new philanthropy' consisting of a partnership between statutory and voluntary services. The history of philanthropy was written as a prelude to the history of the welfare state, a perhaps well-meaning but insufficient attempt to cope with social problems that were beyond its capacity. This was largely a European discussion and diagnosis.

Eight stratum: Big philanthropic foundations

Across the Atlantic, fueled by vast fortunes, a new kind of philanthropy was born, an eighth stratum. It was the age of foundations (Leat, Chapter 18; Harrow *et al.*, Chapter 19), established, in the words of one of them 'for the improvement of mankind'. The Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller Sr., the John D. Rockefeller Jr., the Edward Harkness, the Russell Sage Foundations were all founded in the early twentieth century, all aiming, as Frederick Gates, Rockefeller Sr.'s advisor, put it, on giving wholesale, not retail (Sealander, 2003: 221). Emancipated by their wholesale approach from having to grapple with individual poverty, or indeed with poverty at all, they were free to aim at the eradication of disease or the improvement of agricultural yields. There were 27 foundations in the US by 1915, over 200 by 1930 (Zunz, 2011: 22). Linking up with progressive reformers, they believed that the solution to deep-rooted problems lay in science and research, not in giving directly to the poor. The beneficiaries of their largesse were likely to be universities and research institutes, especially in the social sciences.

Ninth stratum: 'New' philanthropy

The ninth and final stratum in the history of philanthropy to date emerged with the criticism of welfare states that started in the 1970s and grew with exponential speed from the 1980s onwards. It coincided with a marked increase in inequality, and in the relative wealth of the very rich. High taxation levels disappeared as entrepreneurs argued that they were a disincentive to investment, risk-taking and hard work. The resulting superfluity of ready money in the pockets of high net worth (HNW) individuals gave a new confidence to philanthropists that they had a role to play and the money with which to play it. Another 'new philanthropy' was born. Some of its propagandists, lauding 'philanthrocapitalism', saw it as capable of solving the world's most

deep-rooted problems, a happy marriage of capitalism's efficiency and entrepreneurship applied to disease and poverty, to higher education and the arts (Bishop and Green, 2008).

Concluding remarks

The history of philanthropy has too often been written in an either/or way. Either as something to celebrate and take inspiration from, or as a cautionary tale of man's – and it is almost entirely reported as a male story – over-optimistic hopes of what could be achieved, not unmixed with a degree of vanity and self-promotion. A geological approach helps to free us from the either/or approach. It suggests that strata laid down centuries ago still work their influence; it draws attention to the ways in which philanthropy is constantly claiming novelty, while often only reverting to old models and ways of thinking. Its history is as much circular and repetitive as progressive and linear, not least because there is only a limited number of ways of trying to resolve poverty and the problems associated with it, and they are likely to recur, or run alongside each other. How do you distinguish between the deserving and undeserving? Can residential institutions help people or do they simply institutionalize them?

A geological approach highlights the indeterminate boundaries of philanthropy. The word itself gained currency only in the late eighteenth century, and what it signified changed considerably in the period since then, and has never been fixed. The nine strata I have identified could be extended. I have written nothing about giving by the poor to the poor which, it was widely attested in the nineteenth century, was much more significant than that of the rich to the poor (Prochaska, 1980: 42–3). I have not explored the interrelations between philanthropic imperatives and religious beliefs occurring within, and impacting upon, the West which are derived from faiths other than Christianity (Robbins, 2006; Singer, 2013). Nor have I elaborated on what Zunz (2011) calls 'mass philanthropy', represented by March of the Dimes in the US, small giving by the mass of the population. All these different strata, however, have one thing in common: they are all forms of gift relationships that continue to exert influence in numerous ways and across different contexts on the sometimes contentious and sometimes contended understandings of philanthropy in the West.

Notes

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