

**Replacing charity, anticipating the welfare State: A conceptual genealogy of
philanthropy in France since the Age of Enlightenment.**

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Philanthropy has been described as an essentially contested concept (Daly, 2011; Gallie, 1955), with diverse and competing interpretations over time and across contexts. It is only recently that scholars have sought to unpack the different layers of meaning in order to have a complete understanding of the term “philanthropy” (Payton & Moody, 2008; Sulek, 2010a). While several scholars acknowledge that philanthropy is a universal endeavor, the vast majority of philanthropic studies have been published in the United States (Acs & Phillips, 2002). Another shortcoming of much contemporary research on philanthropy is its lack of historical embeddedness , except for the work of qualified historians (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003; Zunz, 2011). Simplistic, linear histories or a-historical studies place major limits on our knowledge of philanthropy.

In the present research, we use a conceptual genealogy approach (Foucault, 1971; Palonen, 2002) to study the history of philanthropy in France since its inception in the Age of Enlightenment. Conceptual genealogy is a historical sociology of concept formation, a particular kind of history that focuses on “words in their sites” (Somers, 1995a) and how agents construct and change meanings systems that evolve through time. To do so, we rely on primary sources like dictionaries, encyclopedias, literary texts, and pamphlets produced in France over the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, as well as secondary sources such as the work historians and other analysts of the period under study. By tracing how the concept of philanthropy formed, evolved, and was disputed among different social groups in a country often considered as hostile to philanthropy, we shed light on the performative nature of concepts on cognitive frames and activities that are still valid in the present.

Our results focus on key historical moments and shows that philanthropy went from a liberal, secular virtue of the Enlightenment to a reformist and elite movement vying for social progress and rival of traditional Catholic charity, paving the way for – and being partially replaced by – the welfare State (Rose & Miller, 1992). Through our historical analysis of the

concept of philanthropy in France, we show that the popular opposition between “private giving” and “public welfare”, often understood as substitutes, does not hold (Loseke, 1997). From the French Revolution to recent fiscal incentives, philanthropy has been alternately controlled and encouraged by the State, sometimes both at once. We also show that after a consensual use until the 1789 Revolution, philanthropy was gradually exposed to a two-fold critique: on the right, by conservative Catholics from 1820 onwards; on the left, by socialist and solidarist thinkers after 1840. At the dawn of the 20th century, the concept of philanthropy withered and was trumped by the idea of a welfare State.

Methods – Conceptual history

To explore the evolving conceptualizations of philanthropy in the French context, we use a methodological approach called conceptual history (Koselleck, 2002; Skinner, 1969). Conceptual history can be defined as a “historical sociology of concept formation” (Somers, 1995b: 115), which understands concepts as “words in their sites” (Somers, 1995a: 113). It is thus a particular form of history that focuses on “the contested and historical character of the use of concepts” (Palonen, 2002: 103). Akin to Michel Foucault’s (1984) genealogy, conceptual history relies on a constructivist epistemology whereby concepts are contextual, situated and socially constructed by human agents and groups. As such, it constitutes an alternative to the naturalist, a-historical use of concepts as a mere “essence of things” that is commonplace in many studies of philanthropy (Katz, 1999; Payton, 1988).

In contrast, conceptual history allows researchers to understand the political, social, and cultural background on which concepts are formed and evolve over time through human agency (Koselleck, 2002; Somers, 1995a). Also, this style of historical analysis does not entail linear, seamless evolution, but is particularly interested in contingencies and contestations, namely “the accidents, the minute deviations [...], the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us”

(Foucault, 1984: 81). In other words, conceptual history enables us to trace “the conflicting and changing interpretations of the concepts” (Palonen, 2002: 97) used by different historical agents and the power struggles between rival interpretations of the same concepts.

Another merit of conceptual history is to encourage reflexivity among scholars regarding “the often taken-for-granted conceptual tools of research” (Somers, 1995a: 114) that they rely on. Indeed, since the early 1990s scholars of various social sciences have turned to conceptual history to critically examine important conceptual categories including “structure” (Sewell, 1992), “civil society” (Somers, 1995b), “poverty” (Dean, 1992), or “sovereignty” (Bartelson, 1995). In recent years, the interest for conceptual history has blossomed with studies of concepts such as “social capital” (Farr, 2004), “governance” (Cajvaneanu, 2011), “neoliberalism” (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009), and “limited liability” (Djelic & Bothello, 2013). In the past decade, books and articles (Hampsher-Monk, Tilmans, & Vree, 1998; Koselleck, 2002; Palonen, 2002) have revived and refined the methods outlined by pioneering historians of concepts Quentin Skinner and Reinhart Koselleck. Our research on philanthropy in France builds upon this dynamic stream of research.

Why use conceptual history to study philanthropy? First, as mentioned above, many academic studies of philanthropy adopt an essentialist, a-historical definition such as “private giving for public purposes” (Salamon, 1992) or “voluntary action for the public good” (Payton, 1988). Second, as scholars of philanthropy have recently acknowledged, we still lack a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the meaning of philanthropy (Sulek, 2010a) because it is an “essentially contested concept” (Daly, 2011; Gallie, 1955) whose meaning has been contested and evolved over time and space. Third, a vast majority of academic studies of philanthropy have come from the United States and relied on American data – including historical studies of the field (Friedman & McGarvie, 2003; Harvey, Maclean, Gordon, & Shaw, 2011; Zunz, 2011). Combined, these three factors call for a deeper, more situated study

of philanthropy in a variety of contexts outside the U.S.: conceptual history seems particularly suited for this task.

Why conduct a conceptual history of philanthropy in France, then? First, there are obvious and practical reasons. Besides a few studies publish in French by French historians (Duprat, 1993; Marais, 1999), France is almost never used as an empirical ground for studying philanthropy. Yet, despite truisms about the absence of a culture of philanthropy in France due to its strong Jacobin and centralized state tradition (Archambault, 1997; Gautier, Pache, & Mossel, 2015), there is a rich, overlooked history of history of philanthropy in this country. Our knowledge of the French language and our access to numerous archives prompted us to explore this history and share it with colleagues and readers from other parts of the world.

Second, and more important, as conceptual histories explore contestations and changing interpretations of conceptual categories (Foucault, 1984; Palonen, 2002), we believe that France offers an appropriate and captivating context to study this. Indeed, as will be explained in detail below, philanthropy in France has had a tumultuous path, with a variety of advocates and critiques. Tracing the contingencies and struggles surrounding the word *philanthropie* holds promises to better understand this “slippery idea which none of us can seize firmly” (Daly, 2011: 537)

The empirical material used in conceptual histories is similar to that used by the historian. This material is usually textual in nature and includes primary and secondary documents. As Djelic and Bothello (2013: 591) outlined in their study of limited liability and moral hazard:

“Primary documents are all those texts produced in the period of a given conceptualization that have contributed in one way or another to shape and stabilize it—legal documents, encyclopedias and dictionaries, textbooks, pamphlets, scientific

or technical “bibles” but also newspapers and various kinds of commentaries. Secondary documents are the work of commentators—historians or other analysts who later on came to discuss and account for a given conceptualization and its context.”

For primary documents, we explored the main French encyclopedias¹ and dictionaries² to trace the definitions of philanthropy over time. We also searched for essays, literary texts, pamphlets, parliamentary archives explicitly discussing *philanthropie*. As will be detailed below, philanthropy navigated throughout history alongside other popular concepts pertaining the progress of humanity and help for the poor, such as charity (*charité*), beneficence (*bienfaisance*), solidarity (*solidarité*), and patronage (*mécénat*). We focused solely on philanthropy, but we included documents that discussed it in relation to other terms. As for secondary sources, we collected and explored the works of historians and other social scientists who published relevant and rigorous texts containing conceptual discussions of philanthropy in the French context.

As with most conceptual histories, and given the size constraints of a research article, our aim is not to be exhaustive. Instead, we focus on the main scenes and key historical moments when meanings appear to change (Foucault, 1984; Skinner, 2002). To analyze how the concept of philanthropy evolved over time in France, we started in 1712 with the introduction of the word in the French language by theologian and writer Fenelon, and moved forward from that point (Djelic & Bothello, 2013). As our data analysis unfolded, we identified three phases that we detail in the next sections: the emergence of philanthropy as a virtue during the Enlightenment (from 1712 until the 1789 Revolution); the upsurge of philanthropy as a secular, progressive and organized alternative to Catholic charity (from 1789 to the end of the July Monarchy in 1848); the reach of “peak philanthropy”, the socialist and *solidariste* critique of its failures, and the dawn of the welfare State (from 1848 to the first

¹ Diderot and D'Alembert, Yverdon, Courtin/Didot, Dreyfus/Berthelot, Monzie/Febvre.

² Furetière, Trévoux, Larousse, Littré, Académie Française, Féraud, Lévy Frères.

World War). As the latter progressed, philanthropy became a marginal concept during the 20th century. However, as we discuss in the conclusion of this article, it has made a remarkably consensual comeback in the early 21st century, as the Welfare state regresses in France and a global philanthropic movement rises worldwide.

Philanthropy: A secular virtue of the Enlightenment (1712-1789)

It is now well documented that the word philanthropy (*philanthrōpía*) appeared in ancient Greece during the 5th century BCE as a compound word composed of *phileô* (love, affectionate regard, or friendship) and *anthrōpos* (mankind, humanity) usually translated as the love of mankind (Aeschylus, 1983; Sulek, 2010b). While it was sparingly used by Greek philosophers Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, it is not until the late Renaissance that the word appeared in modern languages. In English, Sir Francis Bacon first used the word in a 1612 essay entitled “On Goodness and Goodness of Nature”, and its meaning (“affecting the weal of men”) was reminiscent of an Aristotelian virtue (Bacon, 1985; Sulek, 2010a).

100 years later, the French word *philanthropie* first appeared in Fénelon’s 1712 called essay “Dialogues of the Dead”, which he wrote as a theologian, writer, and tutor of the young Duke of Burgundy. In this essay, Fénelon creates a conversation in Athens between Socrates, Alcibiades, and Timon. The debate opposes Timon, a noted misanthropist, and Alcibiades, a famous and admired statesman and general. Socrates intervenes to outline a middle ground: even if men are flawed, one ought to love them and do them good, but without expecting anything from them in return. Philanthropy, then, is “a gentle, patient and selfless virtue, which endures evil without approving it” (Fénelon, 1830: 173–174). Through Socrates’ voice, Fénelon introduces an interesting distinction between true philanthropy, which is quiet, tolerant, selfless, and looks to cure the ills of other men, and fake philanthropy, practiced by Alcibiades, which is driven by self-love and a quest for public approval. The former is “divine” while the latter is vainglorious, corrupt, and dangerous.

The works of encyclopedists and philosophers

Fénelon's conceptualization will prove to be very influential throughout the 18th century. Prominent encyclopedias and dictionaries like Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) and the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1704-1771) added the word *philanthropie* and copied entire sentences from Socrates' tirade in the Dialogues of the Dead, adding only minor changes. Importantly, the core idea that philanthropy was a virtue, relying on man's natural goodness, became conventional. The word philanthropist (*philanthrope*) probably appeared around 1750 and was defined as "he who by disposition and natural goodness is inclined to love all men" in the 1762 French Academy Dictionary, and as "the friend of mankind" in the 1771 edition of Trévoux.

From the midst of the 18th century onwards, Enlightenment philosophers and writers espoused similar views regarding the nature of man. In his essay *Les Moeurs*, Toussaint (1748) wrote that humans have a general interest in the well-being of their fellowmen, for the sole reasons that they are men like them. Voltaire (1964) famously argued in his Philosophical Dictionary that virtue is beneficence towards other men, regardless of one's faith or personal morals. Enlightenment intellectuals believed that the first and highest virtue was this universal affection for humanity, of doing good to others. They used an array of different concepts to express similar ideas: philanthropy, beneficence, humanity, sociability, liberality... In the second half of the 18th century, the first two concepts (*philanthropie* and *bienfaisance*) gained more acceptance than the others (Cohen, 2003; Duprat, 1993).

Charity and philanthropy

Of course, these new and progressive ideas were in sharp contrast with the Christian dogma and the Roman Catholic Church institution. The well-established concept of charity (*charité*) was already in use to describe one of the three theological virtue (faith, hope, and charity), which referred to the "love of God" (*caritas* means love in Latin), and the love of

man as a creature of God. For Christians, *charité* is not only an ideal but also a call to action: helping ones' neighbor and distributing alms to the poor, as God did for his creatures. The poor person is central to the Christian theology because he is Christ incarnate. As such, a core idea developed in the Middle Ages that "almsgiving atones for sin" (Sirach 3:30): for the rich man to gain salvation, he must practice charity (Cohen, 2003: 387).

At least since the 9th century, charity was practiced in France and in Europe by Catholic congregations. The first hospitals, hospices, and orphanages were built by clergymen and financed through donations and bequests of rich noblemen and merchants (Cohen, 2003; Coing, 1981). As they developed over the centuries, these *de facto* foundations were met with suspicion by feudal lords and royal power. Virtually removed from the national economy and avoiding property sale taxes usually paid to the lord or the king, Catholic foundations were referred to as "mortmain" (*mainmorte*) became increasingly controlled during Renaissance (Marais, 1999; Pomey, 1980): prior authorization of the king before any new creation, registration of the assets given to the Church or congregations, payment of heavy fees... However, these foundations preceded and were not related to the term "philanthropy", but they were associated with Catholic charity.

When *philanthropie* and *bienfaisance* appeared in the first half of the 18th century, many Catholic writers and clergymen in France used these new words in a positive way. They were not seen with contempt or derision, as will be the case a century later, but as synonyms of charity. The man who coined the word, Fénelon, was a Catholic theologian. The Jesuits from the Trévoux dictionary wrote in 1725 that beneficence was the spirit of true religion, and the main purpose of the Gospel. Increasingly, though, Enlightenment philosophers promoted philanthropy as a secular, progressive alternative to charity (Cohen, 2003).

The second half of the 18th century in France witnessed a growing conceptual distinction between religious charity and secular philanthropy. Diderot, Morelly, Rousseau,

Helvetius, and Voltaire believed than man was good and society perfectible: in their view, “love of mankind” neither required the intercession of God nor was to be channeled through Catholic institutions (Duprat, 1993). Their essays were scandalous to the Church, and many were banned in France and distributed covertly. Voltaire (1964), in particular, was highly critical of the Church and wrote that vainglorious philanthropists were more virtuous than saints living in seclusion. He argued for improving society without expecting personal salvation in return.

Freemasonry as a philanthropic project

When freemasonry first appeared in France in the 1720s, its members were mostly English, Irish, and Scottish elites in exile. The first well-documented lodge was created in Paris in 1725 and French citizens were increasingly accepted (Dachez, 2015). In 1736, the Scottish writer and philosopher Andrew Michael Ramsay pronounced a famous discourse which many consider the founding text of French freemasonry. In this text, he defines four qualities to become a freemason: philanthropy (love of mankind), sound morals, secrecy, and a taste for sciences and fine arts (Henderson, 1952). By philanthropy, Ramsay not only meant mutual assistance between brothers, but also a concern for the well-being of the whole human race. At the time, there were only a few hundreds of freemasons in France and all were Christian – either Catholics or Protestants. Irreligion and licentiousness were condemned, and all masons had to believe in God and life after death (Beaurepaire, 2002).

However, in 1738, the papal bull *In eminenti apostolatus specula* condemned freemasonry and threatened Catholics joining masonic lodges of excommunication. Freemasonry’s religious tolerance, secret rituals, and growing influence in the French elite were considered threats by the Catholic Church, which still prohibits Catholics from becoming freemasons today (Dachez, 2015). The papal bull was never enforced by the government, and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, French freemasons were eager to

respect the established political powers. But the seeds of the 19th century conflict between the anticlerical wing of French freemasonry and the Catholic Church, which we explore below, were already sown.

Putting virtue into practice: the first philanthropic societies

During the last decade before the French Revolution, the concept of philanthropy evolved. A virtue and philosophical idea, *philanthropie* also became a doctrine of action, a social movement of reformist elites (Duprat, 1993; Lambelet, 2014). Inspired by the Enlightenment philosophers, progressive members of the French bourgeoisie and nobility founded the first philanthropic societies. They were industrialists, bankers, physicians, scientists, philosophers, or public officials. In 1780, the *Société philanthropique de Paris* was created by seven men (including Savalette de Langes and Saint-Martin, two prominent freemasons) to pool resources and ideas in order to support the poor in Paris and to restore their dignity (Duprat, 1993). A similar group was created in Marseilles in 1789 by Guillaume de Paul, official, art collector, also a freemason (Beaurepaire, 2008).

A key aspect was their secular character and their openness to all opinions and beliefs. Noting the failure of Catholic charity to eradicate poverty, their members looked for innovative ways to help the needy beyond traditional almsgiving and moralization: pensions for the disabled and elderly, nutritive soup kitchens, schools for the blind, petitions to abolish slave trade or to reform prisons... (Duprat, 1993) So-called philanthropists were not only donors; they often were prolific inventors such as Piarron de Chamousset, a doctor who modernized hospital beds and designed the first mutual benefit societies, or the German pedagogue Basedow who invented a reformist, progressive school called “philanthropinum” and inspired by Rousseau’s philosophy (Pinloche, 1889). The neologism *philanthropisme* was coined to describe this new educational movement as it spread to France.

The Revolution and its aftermath: A triumph of philanthropy over charity (1789-1830)

On the eve of the 1789 Revolution, philanthropic societies were part of a proliferation of new organizational forms that flourished in Paris, such as clubs, political committees, press groups, and masonic lodges (Beaurepaire, 2008; Duprat, 1993). Both as an idea and as a practice, philanthropy was an important keyword in liberal and progressive circles. In public discourse, the word philanthropist was used to designate admired scientists and statesmen such as Benjamin Franklin, Parmentier, or Turgot. In the years before and after the French Revolution, its meaning evolved and became an equivalent of “patriot” (*patriote*), in other words, a supporter of the Revolution and the French Republic (Duprat, 1993).

The French Revolution and philanthropy: friends or foes?

The French Revolution famously abolished intermediate bodies and corporatist privileges affiliated with the *Ancien Régime* (guilds, companionships, but also Catholic charitable foundations), which stood between the individual citizen and the State, and seized the Church’s and congregational assets (Coing, 1981; Furet, 1981; Rosanvallon, 1990). This led some present-day observers to the conclusion that the French Revolution was hostile to philanthropy and hampered its development in the country (Charhon, 2016; Debiesse, 2007). Yet direct targets of these drastic measures were the assets possessed by the Catholic Church and congregations, especially foundations (Archambault, 2003; Pomey, 1980), considered by Republicans as unproductive vestiges of the *Ancien Régime*³ and latent counterrevolutionary forces – not private initiatives for alleviating social ills by themselves.

As Catherine Duprat (1993) demonstrated in her history thesis *Le temps des philanthropes*, the Revolution did not prohibit philanthropic societies nor did it discourage private giving from individuals. Several reform proposals under the First Republic on public assistance (*comités fraternels*), instruction, slave trade, or foundlings, were directly inspired by philanthropic experiments from the late 18th century. Many elected officials and public

³ In 1757, Turgot wrote the article “Foundations” for Diderot & d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* and was very critical of several shortcomings of charitable foundations: vanity of founders, loss of tax revenues for the State, immobility of capital, mismanagement and obsolescence over the years...

servants were themselves philanthropists, and the ideal of the “philanthropic statesman” was common at the time. Some philanthropic societies like the *Société philanthropique de Paris* temporarily received grants from the State or municipalities (Dedeyan, 1983). Commonplace oppositions in political theory between public and private spheres, government and civil society (Rose & Miller, 1992), were almost irrelevant in this particular moment of French history. The true political opposition in the early years of the Republic was between supporters of the Revolution and of the *Ancien Régime* (Furet, 1981).

During the Convention (1792-1795), congressmen proposed several ideas to reform public assistance. A draft decree from March 19th 1793 stated that “every man is entitled [...] to free assistance if he is unable to work. Providing subsistence to the poor is a national burden”. Cantons were responsible of delivering the aid, to be financed by taxes and the sale of seized Church assets (Mavidal & Laurent, 1867). However, under the Directory (1795-1799), congressmen realized that the State was running out of funds to provide direct subsistence to the poor. Philanthropy was deemed necessary to achieve the lofty goals set by the Republic and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (Duprat, 1993). Unlike charity, though, it was expected to be egalitarian and universal, eschewing the perpetuation of feudal inequalities between noble donors and poor recipients (Marais, 1999).

Philanthropy and religions under the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte

Between 1795 and 1801, many clubs, lodges, and philanthropic societies suspended their activities, including the pioneering *Société philanthropique de Paris* (Dedeyan, 1983). These were troubled times of political instability. After the coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799 and his rise to power as First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned Emperor of the French in 1804. His authoritarian, centralized and pragmatic regime was seen by the French as a stable alternative to the turmoil that followed 1789. He preserved most improvements from the

Revolution, but he also pacified the church-state relations by signing the Concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII.

This agreement restored the Roman Catholic Church's civil status – but not its confiscated assets. In practice, the Church and congregations were allowed to resume their charitable activities and were paid salaries by the State as long as they respected its authority and control. In 1801, donations and bequests to Catholic organizations were cautiously authorized again after approval by the government. The creation of the Napoleonic Code (*Code civil*) in 1804 gave a legal recognition to private donations to State-approved charitable and philanthropic organizations (Marais, 1999). As a consequence, a new generation of both Catholic and secular voluntary associations and foundations would appear in the early 19th century (Archambault, 1997; Gueslin, 1987).

Religious tolerance was also a strategic priority of the Emperor to ensure the stability of his rule. Catholicism was not made the official state religion and Judaism and Protestantism were also protected by equivalents of concordat, paving the way for future philanthropic initiatives from these religious minorities (Leglaive-Perani, 2011). While tensions between the government and religions relaxed, new spiritual movements appeared publicly and developed in the decades after the Revolution. Most of these movements were deisms. Long concealed during the Enlightenment and deemed heretics by the Church, its members believed in the existence of God, but not in God's revelation or influence on human events (Betts, 1984).

In 1796, a Parisian librarian named Chemin-Dupontès created *théophilanthropie*, a familial, humanitarian, and deistic cult preaching the love of God *and* of mankind (Chantin, 2003). It was established to be a natural, rational and tolerant religion, able to reconcile all faiths and cults. Belief in a “Supreme Being” and immortality of soul were its sole dogmas, as theology and metaphysical debates were prohibited (Mathiez, 1903). Much to the Catholic

Church's dismay, thephilanthropy gained an impressive popularity among elites and *petite bourgeoisie* and spread rapidly in cities like Paris, Rouen, or Poitiers, as well as in rural areas of Seine and Yonne. Ceremonies were organized weekly, mixing various religious and moral traditions. The founder and five leaders of thephilanthropy were or later became freemasons (Chantin, 2003; Dachez, 2015). After the cult was banned by the Consuls in 1801, many adepts joined freemasonry while others created smaller, similar cults that were not as successful.

A triumph of philanthropic action in the early 19th century

Fueled by the ideals of the Revolution and shaped by the rules set by Napoleon Bonaparte, philanthropy rapidly developed in the first decades of the 19th century. A myriad of initiatives flourished in cities such as Paris, Lyon, or Marseilles to tackle new and old social ills. The most popular causes were homelessness and housing, public health, temperance, old and disabled workers, orphans, juvenile offenders, prison reform, death penalty and slavery abolition, encouraging thrift, insurance and mutual benefit systems (Duprat, 1993; Gueslin, 1987). Reformist elites built upon and extended the model of early philanthropic societies of the 1780s. There were several ways to get involved in these causes, more or less innovative. Traditional activities akin to Catholic charity included patronage of poor beneficiaries by wealthy benefactors, volunteering for distributing aid, and plain giving of money.

However, philanthropists also raised awareness and donations through public campaigns (*souscriptions*), petitions in the press, or prestigious events (Marais, 1999). Beyond giving, some philanthropists were entrepreneurial in their approach. A major figure like La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, involved in many philanthropic societies in the first quarter of the 19th century, brought to France the vaccine against smallpox in 1800 and created the first savings bank (*Caisse d'Epargne*) in 1818 (Dreyfus, 1903). The approach was political as

well. Congressmen and public officials were overrepresented in philanthropic societies and used these organizations to prepare and advocate for progressive reforms. In Parisian hospitals, thousands of volunteers and private donors supported the personnel to make public assistance work, remarkably during the economic crisis of 1826-1830 (Duprat, 1993).

The first decades of the 19th century witnessed the success of philanthropy and its gradual distinction from traditional Catholic charity, much in the footsteps of Enlightenment philosophers of the past century. Three main features distinguished philanthropy from charity.

First, philanthropists trusted science over religious beliefs and wanted to ground their philanthropic action in scientific methods (Topalov, 1999). The first social statistics in France were developed by philanthropic societies. To understand the roots of social ills, field surveys and investigations were conducted in addition to distributing material aid (Duprat, 1993). This emphasis on “scientific philanthropy” is very similar to the intellectual developments of U.S. philanthropy in the late 19th century in opposition to traditional charitable giving (Gross, 2003; Harvey et al., 2011).

Second, philanthropists aspired to help the most vulnerable gain autonomy instead of maintaining them in a situation of permanent dependence. This was in sharp contrast with classic almsgiving and patronage, where passive beneficiaries depended on the generosity of their wealthy supporters (Kettering, 1988). Notorious physician Villermé considered almsgiving “humiliating for the one who receives it”, and advocated instead to “prepare the people for good habits from early childhood” such as savings, good hygiene, or temperance (Leterrier, 1995).

Third, whereas traditional charitable donations were often anonymous and discreet, several philanthropists became renowned public figures of France in the first half of the 19th century. Notorious examples include State councilor Montyon who created prizes to reward virtue, literary and scientific achievements, Gérando the pioneer anthropologist whose

empiric method of visiting the poor to understand the roots of their ills was very influential (Gérando, 1821), or Champion the modest jeweler in his “little blue coat” who gave away his fortune to the poor (Duprat, 1993).

Reflecting this bubbling of hands-on activity, a second layer of meaning for the term “philanthropist” appeared in the 1835 *Académie française* dictionary. A philanthropist is not only someone who loves all mankind (a disposition), but also “he who tries to improve the lot of his fellow men” (a practice). From this date, most French dictionaries and encyclopedia have continued to use both layers in the definition.

The rise of a Catholic critique of philanthropy under Restoration

Though the word *philanthropie* was coined in 1712 by a theologian and many Catholic writers embraced the term well into the 18th century, its prominent users and advocates were mostly progressive and sometimes anticlerical elites (encyclopedists, philosophers, freemasons, scientists, and public officials). Viewing philanthropy as an alternative to – and not a synonym of – Catholic charity and embracing the Revolution against *Ancien Régime*, these elites added to a growing Catholic antagonism in France against secular philanthropy.

After the fall of Napoleon in 1814, the Bourbon Restoration and the constitutional monarchy regime led by Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830) represented a sharp conservative turn. While major institutional change brought about by the Revolution and the Empire was not reversed, symbolic measures were taken to restore the legitimacy of monarchy and the Catholic Church (Tombs, 1996). The first ministers of Louis XVIII were moderates but increasingly the ultra-royalist faction gained influence and eventually brought Charles X to the throne. Fortified by this shift of power, the Church tried to claim back the assets seized during the Revolution and was explicitly allowed to receive real estate as donations and bequests in a 1817 law (Marais, 1999).

Between 1820 and 1830, a growing rivalry opposed ecumenical philanthropic societies and conservative Catholic charities on the ground. Increasingly, Catholic charities conditioned their aid to religious instruction for beneficiaries, and often ignored the novel problems affecting the urban poor (Duprat, 1993). Partly for this reason, secular initiatives served a growing number of beneficiaries. But in this turf war, Catholic charities also adopted innovations brought by philanthropic societies, such as public fundraising campaigns (*souscriptions*) to build or restore churches across the country and to create chairs in Catholic universities (Marais, 1999).

Conceptually, conservative Catholics increasingly attacked ideas associated with the Revolution (Furet, 1995), including secular philanthropy. Abbé Grégoire, a famous catholic priest who played a prominent role in the French Revolution, was disparaged in a 1814 pamphlet called “The philanthropist unveiled”. In royalist journals of the 1820s such as *Mémorial Catholique*, philanthropy was portrayed as a bastard version of charity imagined by wordy philosophers (Duprat, 1993). Catholic members of philanthropic societies or journals, such as the 1825 secretary of the *Société philanthropique de Paris*, had to justify the use of the concept to critics from their own ranks. Philanthropy had become a connoted word that many Catholics began to scorn. In the second volume of his posthumous “Memoirs from Beyond the Grave”, Chateaubriand, a Bourbon supporter who became an ambassador and a minister under Charles X, wrote these critical lines on secular philanthropy:

“An independent mind concerned with the perfection of its fellow men would never have thought of it if the right of nations had not been posited by the Son of Man. Every act of philanthropy we engage in, every system we imagine for the good of mankind, is nothing else than the Christian idea overturned, renamed, and too often disfigured: it is always the Word made flesh!”

A similar idea is found in Balzac's 1841 novel called "The Village Priest", in the words of the character of Abbé Bonnet:

"Philanthropy is a sublime error; it tortures the body uselessly, it produces no balm to heal the soul. Philanthropy gives birth to projects, emits ideas, confides the execution of them to man, to silence, to labor, to rules, to things mute and powerless. Religion is above these imperfections, for it extends man's life beyond this world."

Withering philanthropy: The “social question” and the dawn of a Welfare State (1830-1914)

The increasingly authoritarian and unpopular government of Charles X and the deteriorating economic situation of France eventually led to the "1830 Revolution", a three-day uprising in Paris that ended the Restoration. Despite an attempt to establish a new Republic, the constitutional monarchy regime was preserved with the help of liberal leaders and Louis-Philippe I, Duke of Orléans, became the new King of the French in July 1830 (Furet, 1995; Pinkney, 1972).

Lasting 18 years, the July Monarchy was characterized by relative stability and peace with France's neighbors, a measured evolution towards a parliamentary system, but also the late industrialization of France and the rise of pauperism and insurgence among the new disenfranchised working class (Castel, 1995). The regime started with a large renewal of political and administrative personnel. A modern, liberal elite, favorable to the principles of 1789, replaced its conservative counterpart. Many of them were philanthropists and active in several societies (Duprat, 1993). Despite this ideological shift, political power was still exercised by the upper bourgeoisie (Pinkney, 1972).

The “social question” and the inadequacy of liberal philanthropy

The 1789 Revolution made the French became free and equal before the law, abolishing privileges and intermediate bodies of the past like corporations and congregations. Yet it was

unclear what type of bonds could exist between them and keep French society together (Blais, 2008). By 1830, many in France considered 1789 as an unfulfilled promise. On the one hand, as the succession of regime changes illustrated, the transition towards democracy was uneasy and limited. On the other hand, the first industrial revolution brought about the emergence of a new urban working class in shops, factories and mills. The working and living conditions of many such workers, including children, were terrible (Castel, 1995). In cities like Paris or Lille, epidemics and criminality grew steadily in the 1830s despite the works of many charitable and philanthropic organizations (Marais, 1999).

Pauperism became a central concern for the elite as several revolts of workers in factories, such as silk workers in Lyon (1831 and 1834), were violently repressed by the government. Intense intellectual and political debates in France revolved around the solutions to address the “social question” (*question sociale*) which also rose in other industrializing nations across Europe (Castel, 1995; Tocqueville, 1983). Philanthropy was the secular, progressive answer of the late 18th and early 19th century, competing with traditional Catholic charity (Cohen, 2003). But it increasingly appeared inadequate to cure the profound social ills that affected French society.

First, as several French historians of the 19th century showed, the resources committed by philanthropists were trivial compared to their claims and to the needs of the masses (Delalande, 2011; Marais, 1999; Topalov, 1999). Second, faced with growing inequalities and social tensions between classes, some questioned whether philanthropy was anything else than superficial gestures of the well-off to appease their consciences. Despised by conservative Catholics during Restoration, philanthropy became increasingly criticized by nonconformists and republicans alike. In parts of his first novels, the young Flaubert painted a derisory portrait of philanthropists as well-thinking and tedious bourgeois, whose philanthropic actions were full of silliness and vainglory (Gothot-Mersch, 1997). For instance,

in a 1838 novel called Drunk and Dead, he sarcastically described a philanthropist as “[a] man who loves the others, like a naturalist loves animal museums”. In other novels, Flaubert mocked their naïve scientific devotion, illustrated by their crusade for railroads development and for the cultivation of potatoes to feed the poor (Gothot-Mersch, 1997).

The rise of socialist ideas and the critique of bourgeois philanthropy

Beginning in the 1830s, other ideas and systems to address the social question spread throughout Europe and gained influence in France as well: social Catholicism, mutualism, anarchism, and, most importantly, socialism, both “utopian” and “scientific” (Archambault, 2001; Castel, 1995). While Saint-Simon, the forerunner of French socialism, described himself as a philanthropist in the early 1800s, other influential socialist thinkers criticized philanthropy in many of their writings. Fourier often wrote about “the mask of philanthropy” used by hypocritical leaders to serve their interests. He criticized the illusions of philanthropy in one of his posthumous essays: “we invent only remedies worse than the ills. [...] Our philanthropic illusions are as efficient as our sanitary illusions, which resulted in three or four pests instead of one.” (Fourier, 1847: 56)

Proudhon, theorist of mutualism and anarchism, thought that philanthropy materially and morally kept the poor passive and dependent on the structures of bourgeois society. He ironically wrote about “this democratic philanthropy, which does not tolerate slavery, but perfectly puts up with the most insolent exploitation.” (Proudhon, 1863: 305). Instead of philanthropy, he advocated for voluntary, mutual initiatives by workers to organize their independence from capitalists. Interestingly, Proudhon was also critical of the English poor laws and any form of “State charity”: “The people do not want a poor tax [...], they demand the end of poverty. The poor tax is philanthropy, not organization.” (Proudhon, 1848: 102)

Considering its influence in France since the 1850s, it is necessary to mention here the scientific socialist thought of Marx and Engels. Engels’ (1993) book published in 1845,

“Condition of the Working Class in England”, is peppered with explicit attacks on bourgeois philanthropy. His criticism focuses on the hypocrisy on capitalists practicing philanthropy, and the disproportion between what they exploit from workers and what they give back:

“How can one be otherwise than filled with wrath and resentment against a class which boasts of philanthropy and self-sacrifice, while its one object is to fill its purse *a tout prix*? ”

“As though you rendered the proletarians a service in first sucking out their very life-blood and then practising your self-complacent, Pharisaic philanthropy upon them, placing yourselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when you give back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them! ”

“The English bourgeoisie is charitable out of self-interest; it gives nothing outright, but regards its gifts as a business matter, makes a bargain with the poor, saying: ‘If I spend this much upon benevolent institutions, I thereby purchase the right not to be troubled any further, and you are bound thereby to stay in your dusky holes and not to irritate my tender nerves by exposing your misery.’ ”

In the seventh observation of his 1847 *Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx (2008) described the contradictions of different schools of thought forming the “scientific representatives of the bourgeois class”. The final one is the philanthropic school:

“It denies the necessity of antagonism; it wants to turn all men into bourgeois; it wants to realize theory in so far as it is distinguished from practice and contains no antagonism. [...]. The philanthropists, then, want to retain the categories which express bourgeois relations, without the antagonism which constitutes them and is inseparable from them. They think they are seriously fighting bourgeois practice, and they are more bourgeois than the others.”

Socialist ideas gained influence in the 1840s as demonstrations and strikes of workers hit Paris and several other cities. Meanwhile, republican leaders advocated for electoral reforms and against the corruption of the regime, which took a conservative turn under Guizot's leadership. Eventually, workers and students took the streets in February 1848 and the July Monarchy was over after three days of violent clashes. The Second Republic was proclaimed and after a few months of transition and reforms, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was the first French president elected by universal male suffrage (Furet, 1995). Political congressmen and ministers with philanthropic experiences such as Carnot, Schœlcher and Buchez, managed to convince conservative factions to vote some progressive reforms inspired by philanthropic societies about unsanitary housing, mutual benefit societies, and savings banks (Duprat, 1993).

From philanthropy to the welfare State

[To be continued...]

Discussion

To understand philanthropy's revival in France over the past decades, it does not suffice to study the growing influence of the American model (Acs & Phillips, 2002) or the rise of a global philanthropy movement (Wiepking & Handy, 2015). The resurgence of a dynamic philanthropic sector in France (Gautier et al., 2015) is surprising only when looking at the phenomenon through a simplistic, short term lens. While it is true that France has a tradition of centralization of power and enjoyed a strong welfare State during a majority of the 20th century (Archambault, 1997, 2001), philanthropy has a rich history since the concept appeared in 1712.

This paper makes several contributions to our understanding of contemporary philanthropy. First, the private giving versus public good dichotomy, which is a cornerstone

of research on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector (Loseke, 1997; Payton & Moody, 2008; Salamon, 1992), does not seem to have much value when looking at the history of philanthropy in France. In particular, we show that since the 1789 Revolution, there has been a proximity of personnel, practices and values between philanthropy and the State. Several public policies or publicly funded mechanisms were inspired by philanthropic initiatives, like savings banks, social housing, or vaccination campaigns.

Second, throughout French history since the Revolution, philanthropy and the welfare State seem to be alternative and complementary modes to provide public goods. Philanthropy was strong before France experienced with a welfare State, weaker during the pinnacle of the modern welfare State (1945-1975), and enjoys a revival as the welfare State loses in legitimacy and means to achieve its goals (Rosanvallon, 1981).

Third, we show that after a consensual use until the 1789 Revolution, philanthropy was gradually exposed to a two-fold critique: on the right, by conservative Catholics from 1820 onwards; on the left, by socialist and solidarist thinkers after 1840. At the dawn of the 20th century, the concept of philanthropy withered and was trumped by the idea of a welfare State. The end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century in France could be described as a “golden age” of philanthropy.

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