

**Towards a Critical Social Theory of Philanthropy in an Era of Governance**

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### **Abstract**

Recent scholarship has observed a shift in political systems around the world from hierarchically organized, unitary systems of *government* to more horizontally organized and relatively fragmented systems of *governance*. Within this context, there is a growing expectation and preference for non-governmental and philanthropic action as a means to solve societal problems. There is reason for concern when we discuss governance and its reliance on philanthropy as being inevitable without considering what these labels represent. In this chapter, we explore the role of philanthropy in an era of governance through the lens of critical social theory. Our argument is that we should not focus solely on the delivery mechanism for social policy without discussing what social policy represents and whether philanthropy serves either to cement marginality or if it has the potential to act as a transformative agent for social change.

# **Towards a Critical Social Theory of Philanthropy in an Era of Governance**

## **Introduction**

Recent scholarship has observed a shift in political systems around the world from hierarchically organized, unitary systems of *government* to more horizontally organized and relatively fragmented systems of *governance* (Baccaro 2006; Hirst 2000; Pierre 2000; Rhodes 1994; Sorensen 2002; Sorensen & Torfing 2005). Governance generally refers to a system in which the state becomes one of many authorities or players, along with extra-state institutions, within a given policy area. Within the context of governance, there is a growing expectation and preference for non-governmental action to act as a means to solve societal problems.

Philanthropists and the organizations they fund are becoming key players in the shift from the welfare state to governance. Wealthy individuals like Bill and Melinda Gates and George Soros have the drive and wherewithal to impact public policy on a global scale (Byrne 2002; Zizek 2006; *The Economist* 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d).<sup>1</sup>

There is reason for concern when we discuss governance and its reliance on philanthropy as being inevitable and without considering what these labels represent. The question of what governance means, both theoretically and in practice, is still being debated (Pierre 2000). We seek to contribute to this discussion through an analysis of governance and social policy with a specific focus on philanthropy. In this chapter we explore the role of philanthropy as social policy in an era of governance through the lens of critical social theory. Our argument is that we should not focus solely on the delivery mechanism for social policy without discussing what

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<sup>1</sup> Philanthropy's meaning and manifestations have changed throughout history (Curti 1973); however, in recent years it has come to be defined as the act of giving money and other resources, including time, to aid individuals, causes, and charitable organizations (Philanthropy 2000). We argue elsewhere that it also disguises its own discourse in its portrayal of the mediums of consumption, profit, and media celebration as the basis for benevolent human relations (Nickel & Eikenberry 2006).

social policy represents and whether philanthropy serves either to cement marginality or if it has the potential to act as a transformative agent for social change. We are thus concerned that the surface debate about who ought to deliver social policy disguises the issues that social policy represents. That governance loses sight of issues such as social equity as it reduces discussion about and therefore depoliticizes the causes of the needs addressed by social policy (Fraser, 1989), is also of concern in this paper.

To this end, we begin with an overview of governance as the most recent manifestation of the way in which we have dealt with the creation and implementation of social policy in the United States (and increasingly abroad). Next, we specifically address the relationship between philanthropy and governance through the lens of critical social theory. We use Ryan's (1982) discussion of affirmative social theory and Agger's (1989) theory of fast capitalism as a means to better understand how philanthropy in an era of governance acts to stabilize affirmative social theory and how it has come to be regarded uncritically. We conclude with a call to reframe our discussion of philanthropy and governance at the level of systemic social change. Our hope is that this framing will open a space for alternative dialogue about the neglected issue of marginality rather than to necessarily provide a prescription for social action.

### **Governance and Social Policy**

Governance is increasingly and uncritically "regarded as an effective and legitimate form of societal governance" (Sorensen & Torfing 2005, 205). As noted above, the question of what governance means, both theoretically and in practice, is still being debated; however, Pierre (2000) discusses the general assumptions of governance as:

Sustaining co-ordination and coherence among a wide variety of actors with different purposes and objectives such as political actors and institutions, corporate interests, civil society, and transnational organizations. What previously were indisputably roles of government are now increasingly seen as more common, generic societal problems which can be resolved by political institutions but also by other actors. The main point here is that political institutions no longer exercise a monopoly of the orchestration of governance (4).

In the current era of governance the focus is now on devolvement of what were once considered government responsibilities to nongovernmental entities. New federalism and devolution have given way to governance and associational democracy (Hirst 2000; Pierre 2000; Rhodes 1994; Sorenson 2002; see also Stephenson 2006, on the parallels between federalism and governance), and the foundation of the welfare state (mandatory taxes) is being dismantled in favor of voluntary contributions (philanthropy).

Governance seems to be the latest focus in a long string of debates over the role of the state in an era that Ernest Mandel (1972) titled late capitalism. Late capitalism is “not a new epoch of capitalist development. It is merely a further development of the imperialist, monopoly-capitalist epoch” (Mandel 1972, 10). According to Mandel, the three main functions of the state in late capitalism are the provision of the general conditions of production, the repression of threats to the prevailing mode of production from the dominated classes, and the integration of the dominated classes in order to ensure that they accept their own exploitation (475). This political domination, according to Mandel, is the task of centralized state administration (482). In other words, the state exists to maintain the social structure necessary for capitalism (474-475). What Mandel describes as the state apparatus providing the general-technical and general-social

preconditions of production also describes what we refer to as governance. The question of governance is thus a question of how late capitalism will be administered.

While recent critical theories of the state have for the most part abandoned Mandel's (1972) structural analysis, critical theories of the state do share a recognition that "the expansion of the state in late capitalism somewhat shifts the locus of class, race, and gender struggles from the economy per se to the realm of state policy and politics" (Agger 2006, 170). Thus, a focus on governance "[blames the crises of late capitalism] not on capital but on the federal state, which is supposed to resolve or least soften these crises" (Agger 2006, 170). The current focus on governance—the delivery mechanism for policies aimed at ameliorating the impact of capitalism on social equity and poverty—disguises that the problem is not the way that we address social policy, but that late capitalism creates the need for social policy in the first place. The point is not to discover who best provides a safety net in the form of social policy, but to discover why there is a need for a safety net in the first place.

The relationship between governance and social policy, a relationship in which the responsibility for social policy is dispersed among various social actors and institutions beyond the official boundary of the state, has yet to be fully examined from a critical perspective. This is to say, while the concept of governance is debated, the issues that governance is meant to address—the issues that result in the need for social policy—are frequently not debated. We define social policy as the means by which the state governs private lives, both directly, through state policy, and indirectly, through ideology and funding of non-state organizations and the delegation of responsibility (see Jenks 1992, "Introduction," on the emergence of the term social policy).

Although there has been much recent discussion of the impacts of governance on democracy (see for example: Bang 2004; Boyte 2005; O'Toole, 1997; O'Toole & Meier 2004; Sorensen & Torfing 2003; Wälti, Kubler & Papadopoulos 2004), it appears that the issues that result in the need for social policy in governance are almost entirely neglected, preventing large scale critique of its impact on the everyday lives of citizens. A clear exception to this is Nancy Fraser (1989), who specifically addressed the “reprivatization” scheme that we now call governance when she pointed out that reprivatization is in fact depoliticization – an attempt to depoliticize the issues that the state was once responsible for addressing: “Institutionally, ‘reprivatization’ designates initiatives aimed at dismantling or cutting back social-welfare services, selling off national assets, and/or deregulating ‘private’ enterprise; discursively, it means depoliticization” (172). Fraser (1989) demonstrates how “thin” discussions of needs do little to expose the politics that underlie needs discourses, or “needs interpretation” (163-164).

Especially important to our discussion of the centrality of philanthropy as a means to “meet needs” in an era of governance is Fraser’s (1989) analysis of how discussion of delivery (what she calls networks of in-order-to relations) serves to blind us from the politics of need:

Assume that the politics of needs concerns only whether various predefined needs will or will not be provided for. As a result, they deflect attention from a number of important political questions...they take the *interpretation* of people’s needs as simply given and unproblematic...they assume that it doesn’t matter who interprets the needs in question and from what perspective and in the light of what interests; they thus overlook the fact that *who* gets to establish authoritative thick definitions of people’s needs is itself a political stake (164).

“*Who* gets to establish authoritative thick definitions of people’s needs” is precisely what is at stake in the current emphasis on governance, which often delegates such authority to philanthropists who have already benefited from a definition of needs that allowed them to amass enough wealth that they are able to establish their own means of delivering social policy independent of the state. As Fraser (1989) points out, this is a distinctly political issue. It matters that those who have benefited from the poverty of others get to decide how their poverty will be dealt with. Building on Fraser, we understand the discussion of the role of philanthropy in an era of governance to be a “thin theory” of needs in that it focuses on who will deliver social policy rather than on what the need for social policy represents. In the next section we turn to the politics of philanthropy, focusing specifically on that which is excluded in discussions of how philanthropy might come to take on the role of the state through governance.

### **Disguising the Politics of Philanthropy**

The push to dismantle and disperse the welfare state in the United States and the increase in our reliance on philanthropy and voluntary effort began most forcefully with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, when he famously proclaimed in his inaugural address that “government is not the solution to our problem.” Since then, philanthropy has played a central role in public discussion of reducing the state’s role in alleviating social problems. George H. W. Bush’s “thousand points of light,” Bill Clinton’s “charitable choice amendment,” and George W. Bush’s “faith-based initiative” (and more recent calls for philanthropic disaster relief in response to the Asian Tsunami and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita), are all manifestations of this drive to link voluntary action to the neo-liberal agenda of smaller government.



While some have warned against such a heavy reliance on philanthropy to improve social conditions, noting that philanthropic resources will never be sufficient to make up for government retrenchment (Boris & Steuerle 1999) or be able to be adequately distributed to areas most in need (Diaz 2002; Salamon 1992; Wolpert 1993), few have questioned the basic assumption that philanthropy itself is unquestionably a good thing. The result is that the *social significance of philanthropy* has ceased to be a political issue; we are focused not on the significance of the existence of social problems, but how the policies that disguise them are delivered. This is problematic because the social problems that act as an impetus for philanthropy--poverty and marginality in particular--are not only personal issues, they are distinctly political (Fraser 1989; Gans 1995; Piven & Cloward 1993). The necessity of philanthropy indicates the presence of social problems; it does not indicate that social problems can be eliminated by philanthropy.

The politics of philanthropy is further disguised when it is divorced from the fact that it can only exist through profit, exploitation, and their result, alienation and poverty. For example, today we honor the generosity of mega-wealthy donors for trying to solve “wicked” problems (*The Economist* 2004) with little or no discussion of the system that allows them to own most of the wealth and while billions of people unnecessarily live in poverty around the world (UNDP 2005). Slavoj Zizek (2006) further describes this disconnect:

This is what makes a figure like [philanthropist] Soros ethically so problematic. His daily routine is a lie embodied: Half of his working time is devoted to financial speculations and the other half to humanitarian activities... that ultimately fight the effects of his own speculations. Likewise the two faces of Bill Gates: a cruel businessman, destroying or

buying out competitors, aiming at virtual monopoly, employing all the dirty tricks to achieve his goals ... and the greatest philanthropist in the history of mankind (42-43).

As Roelofs (1995) argues, philanthropy and its institutions essentially serve as a protective layer for the vagaries of capitalism, mitigating “the shock of marketization, which has brought about...unemployment and destitution” (para. 26). The practice of philanthropy in this context then may be understood as the maintenance of the conditions necessary for the capitalist mode of production.

Given this apparent failure to recognize the politics of philanthropy, we contend that philanthropy can and should be explained from a critical perspective. By doing this, we hope to invigorate public discourse about the suffering that philanthropy claims to address. Critical social theory, including Mandel’s (1972) critical theory of the state, provides an important cautionary perspective on the current enthusiasm about the relationship between philanthropy and governance. This is not to say that philanthropy is only the administration of late capitalism; however, if we accept the premise of late capitalism, governance has designated philanthropy as the apparatus of the capitalist state.

Critical social theory specifically addresses what Mandel (1972) understands as the integrative function of the state, or the way in which the state ensures that dominant ideology is internalized as acceptable, thus deepening our understanding of how a reliance on philanthropy has a specifically ideological bent. In what follows, we focus on two critical social theories-- Michael Ryan’s discussion of affirmative social theory and Ben Agger’s theory of fast capitalism--to help us to understand how philanthropy in an era of governance acts to stabilize affirmative social theory and how it has come to be regarded uncritically.

## Philanthropy as the Affirmative Social Theory of Marginality

The uncritical assumptions underlying philanthropy today are that it symbolizes benevolence and that its aim is to end marginality (see Byrne 2002; *The Economist* 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Gibbs 2005/2006; Poniewozik 2005/2006). Yet, in practice, philanthropy is frequently constructed and supported by the very thing that it claims to end – marginality. Philanthropy is dependent upon the existence of marginal groups in need of assistance and a more powerful group in a position to offer this assistance. Thus, when we discuss philanthropy we assume that some level of inequity exists and this inequity is natural. In other words, discussions of how philanthropy might be encouraged and sustained are simultaneously discussions about how the system, whatever it is and wherever it is, cannot be changed such that the need for philanthropy would be eliminated.

Marginality as affirmative social theory, or what Mandel (1972) discusses as integration, is based in metaphysics, or “the setting up of norms which are given out to be self-evident (because derived from such unquestionable truths are consciousness, presence, nature, life, and ownership) and the marginalization of anything that puts the norm in question” (Ryan 1982, 126). Philanthropy as a coping strategy for dealing with the problems of marginality is what Michael Ryan (1982) has called “the social theory of marginality” (126). Building on Janice Perelman’s *The Myth of Marginality* (1976), Ryan (1982) argues that the branding of marginals acts as a metaphysical justification of repression (126): “Metaphysically informed social theories, in the hands of the ruling classes, become social policy” (127). This is so because, for Ryan (1982) “metaphysics is the infrastructure of ideology” (117), particularly where, as in the case of philanthropy, it enters “the domain of practice” (118).

Philanthropy as the metaphysical social theory of marginality “preserves the purity of the social system by making a decisive opposition between the good inside and the bad outside...” (Ryan 1982 127). Society’s ideal image of itself is “reinforced by the negative image of the marginals who are excluded from it” (Ryan 1982, 127). For example, images of emergency food clients used to attract donors are often portrayed as patient sufferers, humbly waiting for help (Poppendieck 1998, 303). The homeless present a similar case; they are forced to remain supplicants and objects of charity if they want to receive help. If marginalized groups were to organize and make demands—exercise their rights as citizens—they would lose appeal as a charitable cause (Katz 1989). Thus, philanthropy as it is understood and practiced today (see Nickel & Eikenberry 2006) often acts as affirmative social theory as it stabilizes the myth of the necessity of marginality through the metaphysical assumption that the distinction between the haves and have-nots is pre-given or natural (an assumption that we will discuss further in the following section as being ideological by virtue of appearing unauthored and thus unchangeable) and that our efforts are limited to social policies that stem from the very system that cause this distinction in the first place.

When the social world becomes divided into givers and receivers, “haves” and “have-nots,” a conceit or moral superiority is encouraged among benefactors and a feeling of demeaning inferiority among beneficiaries. A society relying too exclusively on philanthropy can easily fall into moral traps because it creates the fiction of a self-sufficient giver and an insufficient receiver. In this context, donors can become too overbearing and too demeaning, are given to covert control, become too insensitive to long-range negative side-effects of interventions, are too given to monumentalism, are too oriented to their own glory, and are sometimes too narrow or inflexible (May 2000, xxi). Psychologically, beneficiaries are put in a

position that is demeaning and destructive to the human spirit because asking for help can be perceived as an admission of inadequacy (Menninger 2000, 211). This uncritical acceptance of relationships of domination enables cruel behavior to occur in the name of virtue. As Wagner (2000) notes: "the rhetoric of virtue has always coexisted with a deep-seated streak of violent repression in America: the physical and cultural genocide against American Indians, the enslavement of Africans, and the conquering of foreign lands" (5).

Philanthropy as it is understood and practiced today presupposes that there must be a distinction between what an individual needs and a society needs. Need becomes something towards which we direct resources on an individual basis, absolving the system of responsibility for the abuses that it renders. This individualization of need immediately absolves society as a whole of responsibility for the needs of its members and social responsibility becomes individual responsibility. Thus, through the use of metaphysics, philanthropy is able act as the social policy of the ruling classes in its distribution of resources, allowing wealthy elites to cover up the hegemonic control they have in society and which perpetuates their wealth and powerful positions (Arnove 1980; Roelofs 1995). This is particularly true in an era of governance, which devolves responsibility for alleviating social problems to those with the financial, organizational, or political resources to gain access (Hirst 2000).

The task of critical philanthropy consists "of showing how the marginals are in fact internal to the bourgeois system, how the purity of society is already contaminated by a blight it would prefer, for its own protection, to consider as external" (Ryan 1982, 127). The key point made by Ryan (1982) is that blights on the system, such as those addressed by philanthropy, are not external. Much of the suffering that philanthropy aims to alleviate is not the result of a lack

of philanthropy, but the result of a system that makes philanthropy necessary. Thus, reliance on philanthropy as a means to achieve democratic governance is immediately problematic.

In the next section, we employ Agger's (1989) theory of fast capitalism as a means of uncovering why philanthropy as affirmative social theory is internalized uncritically. The period that Agger (1989) discusses as fast capitalism will act as a critical contextualization for understanding why we accept the relationship between governance and philanthropy as an affirmative social theory of marginality that is internalized uncritically. Furthermore, Agger's (1989) theory of fast capitalism will help us to explain why we do not discuss philanthropy as what it is – money, or the privatization of public needs (Fraser 1989).

### Philanthropy's Designification of Social Problems

Unlike the late capitalism described by Mandel (1972), fast capitalism is a theory of textuality/ ideology – it is fundamentally about how we form meaning and interpret social life in a time when texts lose meaning and thus our ability to imagine alternatives becomes problematic (Agger 1989, 3-5). Late capitalism is a theory of the state; fast capitalism is a theory of text, culture and ideology and their relationship to politics and, thus, the state. Late capitalism and fast capitalism do not conflict, rather they compliment each other. Late capitalism tells us about the specific activity of the state, the “economic” (by which we mean the political management of the economy) intervention of the state on behalf of capitalism, as well as the role of ideology in the integrative function of the state. Fast capitalism tells us about the behavior of the very activity that late capitalism sustains through the management of the economy in order to (barely) provide the material conditions that are necessary to engage in a consumer culture.

Fast capitalism is a stage of capitalism in which the boundary between ideology and its reproduction in the world is blurred because ideology (text) is internalized and dispersed so quickly that it fails to be understood as alterable (Agger 1989, 18 & 69). Fast capitalism is characterized by “the quickening erosion of writing’s – mind’s – ability to formulate the world in terms that do not borrow so heavily from it that text can only imitate or iterate. Text’s eroding powers of signification enhance the capacity of the exterior environment, now a ‘text’ of sorts, to compel certain intended readings and lives...” (Agger 1989, 4). Following Agger (1989), we understand ideology to be that which compels understandings of marginality as natural and therefore unchangeable. This framework allows us to reveal the way in which uncritical philanthropy intends readings of money as benevolence, disguising that it *stabilizes* rather than *eliminates* the need for philanthropic action. Agger’s (1989) discussion of the blurring boundary between text and material world helps us to understand that philanthropy, rather than changing the world, is dependent upon maintaining a seamless relationship between money and its reproduction in the world under the label governance.

One of the key contributions of the theory of fast capitalism is the explanation of ideology as text. In explaining that the new power relationship is between readers and writers, Agger opens a space for understanding better how ideology functions by appearing not to be ideology. Or, how texts “discipline imagination by appearing not to be written” (39). Agger identifies the four texts of fast capitalism as money, science, edifice, and figure. We are focused here on money as a medium for dispelling the ideology of the necessity of marginality. Agger (1989) writes:

Money’s falsehood lies in the truth it conceals about capital/labor relations, namely that money is possible only if workers are robbed of surplus value. But money is not simply a

text to be read against an external standard of validity, namely that of critique... Money has utility. It also tells the truth in its reified social relation dispersed into the exterior environment (52).

Philanthropy disguises money as benevolence and thus disguises that it is only possible through capital/labor relations. This assumption, or reading, is then dispersed uncritically into the exterior environment, inhibiting social action through its insistence upon change through profit (see Nickel & Eikenberry 2006 on the relationship between philanthropy and profit). We conceive of the uncritical celebration of philanthropy as obscuring a reading of money, which stabilizes the affirmative social theory of marginality.

Philanthropy's text (money) is particularly difficult to read (criticize) because money disciplines imagination by appearing not to be writing (Agger 1989). Hence, profit derived from marginality appears to be the only means by which to facilitate social action. This matters because money is not a benevolent actor, money is ideology and it is deeply internalized ideology where it takes on the name of social justice. Global philanthropists have hardly attempted to disguise the fact that money is given with the intent of stabilizing global capitalism and increasing profit. Zizek (2006) describes philanthropists as guardians of "frictionless capitalism" (42). Global philanthropists profit through stabilization, what Mandel (1972) called integration and Ryan (1982) wrote of as the externalization of blights on the system. Stabilization requires the appearance of equity.

Our awareness of the ideology of philanthropy is lost in the medium of money as text and, in the case of philanthropy, it is further lost as money and the reified social relationship embedded in money, which makes social policy. This is to say, following Agger's (1989) theory of fast capitalism, money is a text (authored and thus changeable) and text that claims not to be



authored is falsely understood as permanent. Therefore when money is used to control the distribution of resources, resources are distributed as social policy according to ideology. This is distinctly exclusionary because social policy comes to be dictated by profit in the hands of the few who are able to amass wealth, further marginalizing those who would change their position in society for the better. Social policy that is dependent upon the ideological text of philanthropy's money legitimates the very system that it is assumed to oppose. It legitimates profit's creation of marginality by appearing to be benevolence rather than profit. What we call philanthropic action actually depends on the social system remaining the same – philanthropic action would cease to be necessary if the system changed such that suffering were drastically reduced.

Fast capitalism (1989) explains that boundaries are blurred in the interest of structuring the social world: “a positivist culture swallows textuality but then expels it into the exterior world. As a text itself, these dispersed versions exercise a power over ‘readers’ who live them as unalterable versions of the unalterable” (24). Thus, philanthropy can be understood as blurring the boundary between state and society through the medium of “governance,” which is de-radicalized through uncritical readings of the assumption that power can be evenly dispersed and thus ready acceptance of the impossibility of doing things differently.

### **Conclusion: Reframing Governance and Philanthropy**

Governance disguises the struggle over social problems as it frames problems as administrative rather than as systemic. The problem is not the cure, but the *cause*. We have argued elsewhere (Nickel & Eikenberry in press) that it is a non-sequitur to treat social problems as though they result from failed attempts to manage them. The problems that a “faith-based

initiative” claims to eliminate, for example, were never the result of the fact that initiatives were not faith-based. Poverty did not result from the fact that it was the government and not the church that was responsible for delivering food, it was the result of a system that causes hunger. Social problems result from attempts to alleviate them only in the sense that the cause of these problems was disguised rather than eliminated. Social policy that is designed to maintain the system that caused the problem in the first place cannot be social policy aimed at alleviating social problems.

When we discuss social problems at the level of who is going to deliver social policy, as in the case of governance, we fail to see the struggle that they represent. As Agger and Luke (2002) note: “A critical political sociology must address not official parliamentary politics but rather other issues of power and domination that play out in culture, the family, sexuality, and education.” (160) Without such a focus struggle, like money, is read passively in fast capitalism. The issues that plague society and which “benevolent philanthropic actors” claim to be eliminating (poverty, disparate education, destruction of the environment) are read as the permanent and unalterable result of an unauthored and thus unchangeable text (money). As Agger (2004) writes: “Fast capitalism robs thought of significance; thus we let our words think for us” (131). Opposition is all but lost in fast capitalism because the boundary between text (ideology) and its internalization as “fact” is lost (Agger 1989). We must cease to focus on *alleviating* suffering caused by temporal conditions (philanthropic action) and focus on *eliminating* temporal causes of suffering (social change).

Thus, a critical social theory of philanthropy and governance would not be aimed at identifying more efficient or “democratic” modes of administering social policy, but would focus on why social policy is necessary in the first place. We have suggested elsewhere, for example

(Nickel & Eikenberry 2006), that philanthropy did not always and does not always have to act as affirmative social theory. It can serve to give voice to those who suffer and create social change. The original Greek term for philanthropy, “*philanthropos*,” meant “love of humankind” (Curti 1973, 487). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, philanthropy in the United States was associated with the advocacy of humanitarian causes ranging from improved prison conditions to the abolition of slavery (Bremner 1994). Jane Addams, a leader of the American settlement house movement, also saw the work of the settlement house as just this sort of philanthropic action, practicing a social ethics that valued the equality of all people and advocated on behalf of the poor (Fischer 1995; Stivers 2000). Wagner (2000) suggests that labor organizing (Caesar Chavez), political leadership (Eugene Debs), social movement leadership (Martin Luther King), and brave innovation (like Sanger and birth control) are more in line with the Greek ideal of *philanthropos* than what we have come see and practice as philanthropy today. A critical social theory of philanthropy would not call for more philanthropy, but for the elimination of the conditions that make philanthropy necessary.

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