THE PALGRAVE HANDBOOK OF ALTRUISM, MORALITY, AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY
Formulating a Field of Study

Edited by Vincent Joffre
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Beyond Altruism: Philanthropy as Moral Biography and Moral Citizenship of Care*

Paul G. Schervish

In this chapter I address four aspects of the practice of philanthropy in biography and society. I wish to show how philanthropy is a more profound array of biographical and societal relationships than its conventional understanding as an activity that flows in, to, or through organizations formally defined in the legal code as nonprofit charitable organizations. On a personal level I define philanthropy as a moral biography of care. On a societal level I define civil society as the moral citizenship of care.

Philanthropy, of course, refers not only to the giving of financial assets and in-kind material contributions but also to volunteering or the giving of time and effort to assist others. In this chapter I use the term philanthropy mainly to giving financial and in-kind contributions; but much of what I say can be extended to the meaning and practice of volunteering as an act of care.

The terms “moral” and “morality” are used in the classical and contemporary sociological sense. For Durkheim (1992) morality is the moral orientation that directs the collective conscientiousness as based on mores or customs. For Weber (1968) the notion of morality is related to his notion of wertrational or value rational orientation undergirding social relationships and social orders. Although the means to achieve an end may be as rationally as any action, wertrational behavior is directed toward a moral end in the sense that it is based on a calling or vocation and is justified by ultimate purpose. Philip Selznick (1999), rooted in the tradition of Durkheim and Weber, maintains that the “moral” dimension of social life is the array of
values that emerge naturally from and mobilize the associations of daily practice:

Human values are rooted in the troubles and strivings of organic life, especially in the transition from immediate impulse to enduring satisfaction. They arise out of the continuities of social existence, including the need to nurture what is immature and unstable...Friendship, responsibility, leadership, love, and justice are not elements of an external ethic...They are generated by mundane needs, practical opportunities, and felt satisfactions. (Selznick 1999:19)

These related definitions by Durkheim and Weber and Selznick are the basis for my speaking about morality as an essential organic dimension of human interaction, in general, not something imposed from outside, and a way of thinking, feeling, and acting in the light of goals, desires, aspirations, and purposes. There is no universal content for what is moral in the sociological sense. But for me there is a general normative value at the personal and societal levels deriving from my understanding of the social relations of care comprising philanthropy in its formal and personal settings.

In the first section of the chapter, I establish a positive definition of philanthropy as a moral biography of care based on Aristotle’s of friendship love (philia) and Jules Toner’s notion of care as attending to others in their true needs. In the second section, I distinguish philanthropic relationships from commercial and political relationships in order to derive a positive definition of philanthropy, as opposed to our conventional residual understanding. This leads me, in the third section, to dismiss and go beyond the false philosophical dualism that sets off selfishness and self-interest in opposition to selflessness and altruism, on the other. I offer instead the notion of a connected or identified self as a more accurate reflection of people’s actual meaning and practice. In the fourth section, I make the case for what I call the “moral citizenship of care” as a more fruitful way to understand civil society and as an alternative to the notion of social solidarity.

Throughout the chapter I tie together the positive sense I have made in my writings over the years about the nature of philanthropy in biography and society, its manifestation as something deeper than either self-interest or altruism, and generated by mobilizing experiences. I do not see myself providing the final word on any topic. Rather, I simply want to draw upon and draw together my thinking to better relate philanthropy to the undergirding themes of morality, altruism, and social solidarity. For me morality is a matter of philia, altruism is not selflessness, and social solidarity is a less productive understanding of societal well-being than the moral citizenship of care from which I render the definition of civil society.

**Philanthropy as a moral biography of philia**

**Moral biography: capacity and purpose**

The starting point for understanding philanthropy as a moral enterprise is the notion of moral biography (Schervish 2006). A moral biography is the way individuals carry out agency. Agency is a continuous process of choice by which people implement their capacities in view of their purposes and in a way that effects outcomes for themselves and others. Capacities are constellation of resources that we control. They include every form of capital or wealth that individuals may possess in greater or lesser degrees. Such capacities are material and personal. Material capacities range from controlling a military to owning oil-rich land to financial wealth. Personal capacities include every form of human capital such as intellectual, musical and athletic skills, celebrity status, charisma, and networks of association, business ownership, and directing a foundation. The greater the capacities, the greater is the range of choice and accomplishment in regard to one’s goals and purposes. The second element, then, of a moral biography is purpose. All of the resources that I mentioned are latent until put into motion by a purpose. Financial capital is potential, as in potential energy, until it is invested. An athletic talent is latent until an individual shapes, applies, and markets this talent in view of a series of plans and objectives. In fact one purpose can be to develop one’s capacities even further.

Taken together capacity and purpose form a moral biography. From classical epic heroes such as Odysseus and Aeneas; to religious personalities such as Moses, Jesus, the Buddha, and Mother Teresa; to subliterary characters such as Luke Skywalker and Wonder Woman—all of these allow us to dissect their life according to how well they combine resources and purpose to create a moral agency. Similarly, we see their opponents—such as the Pharaoh in the case of Moses, the Cyclops in the case of Odysseus, and Darth Vader in the case of Luke Skywalker—portrayed as embodying
nonmoral biographies. Take Moses for example. Here we find that the ethics of leading a moral biography are rooted in a way of life revolving around how he improperly and then, with learning, properly ties together capacity and purpose as he moves from heir-apparent to the Pharaoh to settled sheep herder to champion of his people’s emancipation. And in the case of Luke Skywalker we find that when his capacity outdistances his excellence of purpose or his purpose surpasses his capacity he gets himself and his friends in trouble.

I describe the elements of moral biography in order to set the stage for what I consider to be the moral biography of philanthropy: honorably obtained capacities in the service of a noble purpose. The preceding talked about moral biography as a general form; but in turning to philanthropy it is necessary to give content to the moral biography of philanthropy. For this I turn to Aristotle and contemporary philosopher Jules Toner for their understanding, respectively, of philia and care.

Philia
This first approach focuses on the mutuality of care as described by Aristotle (1999) in his Nicomachean Ethics. The root meaning of philanthropy comes from the Greek philia and anthropos. Philanthropia existed as a beneficial relationship long before the world had any notion that doing good or being financially virtuous was tied to what today we call the “nonprofit sector.” The two terms in combination are almost always translated simply as love of humankind. Today we do not avert to the specific kind of love signified by philia. Philia or friendship love, for Aristotle, extends out in concentric circles from the family to the entire species. Philia originates in the parent-child bond and becomes expanded to the species in philanthropia. Friendship love is a relation of mutual nourishment that leads to the virtuous flourishing of both parties, without priority to either. Because philia is connected in origin to the term species, this friendship love implies that this mutual nourishment extends, as people mature, in mutual nourishment for the entire species.

“A friend is another myself.” “Friends share one soul in two bodies.” “One friend loves the other for the other’s own sake.” In addition to these phrases of Aristotle indicating friendship with others, he extends the notion of friendship both to a relationship with oneself and to less intimate arrangements, for example, to contractual relations with others and even to useful associations in which both parties simply extend honest regard to each other. Yet not surprisingly, the best friendship is the friendship that inspires us and our friends to develop all our virtues and to become ever more fully our true selves.

Care as the implementation of love
There are several ways to deepen our understanding of identification theory (Schervish and Havens 1997) as the explanation of caring behavior. One approach within this model is to consider care as an expression of love. According to Jesuit philosopher Jules Toner (1968), love is the regard of another as an unconditional end, as someone categorically valuable and never to be abused as a means to an unworthy end. Care, in turn, is the implemental or instrumental aspect of love. Toner says care is that activity directed toward attending to others as unconditional ends in their true needs. Care is loving others through practical actions that meet their true needs. Figuring out the true needs of others is never simple, but it is always the right question. From this important philosophical truth, we all need to learn and enunciate the many ways we carry out care in our daily lives: care for family, care for friends, care for others across the globe, and, yes, care for ourselves. Importantly, in this model care is not to be equated only with formal philanthropy. Care is broader and includes all the ways people implement love in ordinary and extraordinary personal relationships. As such, formal philanthropy is one expression of care, not its only or necessarily major expression.

In addition to Aristotle’s philosophy of philia, another path to exposing the positive content of a moral biography is Jules Toner’s (1968) philosophy of care as an expression of love. According to this Jesuit’s combination of Thomas Aquinas and phenomenology, love is the affective regard of another as an unconditional end, as someone categorically valuable and never to be abused as a means to an unworthy design. Care, in turn, is the implemental or instrumental aspect of love. Toner says care is that activity directed toward attending to others as unconditional ends in their true needs. Care is loving others through practical actions that meet their true needs. It can always be disputed, even within our own mind, just what the true needs of others or myself are. But it is always the right question, just as is figuring out what is truly the content of mutual nourishment. Like Aristotle and Aquinas, Toner maintains that love and care of self are essential ingredients for the love and care of others.

In neither of these philosophical foundations is philia or care discussed as necessarily or especially connected to formally defined charitable giving or the nonprofit sector. I will have more to say about this below. The
examples in the mind of Aristotle and Toner are the forms of practical love we carry out in our daily life in all those ordinary and extraordinary personal relationships. Not to be misunderstood, I maintain that this foundational phenomenology undergirds the practice and definition of today’s organizationally based philanthropy as well as day-to-day personal assistance.

Returning to moral biography I suggest a general universal normative content that makes a biography moral. The normative content comes not from capacities. Resources are indeterminate morally. All forms of capital from strength of character to persuasive ability, as I said, are latent. They remain means to an end. What makes a moral biography moral is the purpose that mobilizes resources. The purpose to which all of us are to be aligned is that of philia and care. I remain agnostic about what specific mutual nourishment or true needs any individual should tackle. But the key to morality is an orientation of life to exercise an agency of friendship love and the practice of care.

The question for which the foregoing provides the answer is, what constitutes the positive general substance of morality that draws on the sociological definition Durkheim, Weber, and Selznick, but can serve as general direction for life? My answer is directing our agency in all circumstances toward the purpose of philia and care. This does not mean that we can determine for any particular individuals just what constitutes their philia and care. But the ultimate value end or eratational orientation for all people who reflect on their ultimate purpose, as Aristotle contends, is happiness for others and self at the same time. If happiness is the ultimate goal, again following Aristotle and Toner, the penultimate vocational goal is friendship love and practical care, again simultaneously for others and self. The Sufis say humans are three-brained animals with faculties for thinking, feeling, and acting. Classical sociologists from Comte to Feuerbach to Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all speak of how social action involves belief, emotion, and behavior. Accordingly, I characterize happiness as the unity of significance, compassion, and effectiveness. One final note concerns religious or spiritual individuals for whom issues of morality, a friendship love, and societal well-being are an added dimension. For these individuals the ultimate goal is happiness with God, a divine presence, or some spiritual version of ultimate reality (Schervish and Whitaker 2010). There is happiness from a connection to what Rudolf Otto (1923) calls the “numinous,” from the Latin numen, to nod or bow one’s head to an all-embracing being or force. We are coupled to the numinous as part of our ultimate happiness, such that our wisdom, compassion, and justice are in regard to what Thomas Aquinas argues is the metaphysical unity of love of self, love of neighbor, and love of God.

A positive definition of philanthropy

Definitions of philanthropy abound (Van Til 1990) and range from formal legal definitions to the philosophical and religious. Susan Ostrander and I (1990) define philanthropy as a social relation between a donor and a recipient. When we elaborated our thinking, we recognized that philanthropy could be as problematic as it could be beneficial. Whether philanthropy proves to be meddling or helpful depends upon how well the relationship, which empowers donors more than recipients, meets the needs of recipients and is truly nourishing. Since writing that article I have amended these considerations to pertain to all relationships of personal assistance and not just to formal philanthropy.

Most conceptualizations of philanthropy speak about “voluntary action for the public good” (Payton 1988) or in connection to legally defined charitable giving and the nonprofit sector. My goal, however, is to develop a positive definition that goes beyond the residual delineations as the “third,” “non-governmental,” or “nonprofit” sector. I derive this definition by contrasting what activates the relation between supply and demand in commercial and political relations, on the one hand, and philanthropy on the other.

Commercial relations revolve around “effective demand,” that is, needs voiced by dollars on which the supplier depends. If I need an automobile, I express my demand by providing revenue to the car dealer on the supply side. My demand is “effective” because it causes the supplier to provide the car. I tender the financial wherewithal that the dealer needs to remain solvent. The same is true for electoral relations whereby voters and interested parties on the demand side voice what they want through the medium of votes and campaign contributions. Once again, those who desire to receive goods and services bring them about by effective demand. They provide the resources without which elected officials would not otherwise be able to secure the decision-making positions that deliver those goods and services. Both commercial and political relations are essentially demand led. The transaction between those on the demand side and supply side is finalized by the actions of those on the demand side. As such, those supplying commercial and governmental commodities cannot afford to pay attention
directly to people’s demand-side needs. Their attention must remain on the medium—revenue, votes, campaign support—by which the needs are expressed.

The transactional primacy is reversed in philanthropy. Unlike the clientele of commercial and electoral benefits, philanthropic beneficiaries cannot wield effective demand. They have no materially consequential resources by which to exert consumer sovereignty. As a result, philanthropy is supply- rather than demand-led. Those in need, however, are not without all recourse. They may express their needs silently, with entreaty, or through the advocacy of those who champion their cause. Still, philanthropy lacks demand-side sovereignty. The completion of the transaction by which needs are met by a supply of goods and services depends on transfers of resources by donors on the supply side. If commercial and electoral relations give ascendence to the demand side, philanthropy gives ascendence to the supply side. If allocations in the former are based on effective demand, allocations in the latter are based on what I call affective demand. If in commercial and political spheres those on the supply side pay attention to medium through which a need is expressed, in philanthropic relations those on the supply side pay attention directly to the person in need.

Saying that philanthropy is a matter of affective demand means that the needs of beneficiaries lead donors to act to the extent the donors feel for, identify with, and have empathy for those in need. For philanthropy to occur donors need let enter their humanity the disposition of philia in which those in need are “another myself.” For this to happen, donors have to develop as part of their moral biography of care the capacity to be affectively awakened. Since those in need cannot coerce the fulfillment of a voluntary gift, the affective sensibility of the donor must bloom. In light of the foregoing reflections, I define philanthropy—both formal and personal—as the social relation in which donors supply the means to meet the needs of others simply because they are empathetically stirred by the humanity of those in need. Philanthropy is the response to affective demand such that donors directly fulfill the needs of others simply because they are people in need.

**Beyond altruism**

The next step is to explore the notion of altruism as it is often used in discussions about philanthropy and, in general, as a beneficent communal orientation. I became uncomfortable with the loose use of the term “altruism” from the time I first listened to donors explain the joy, happiness, and self-fulfillment they derived from their philanthropy. In their personal narratives, the respondents were universally adamant about highlighting the intrinsic rewards brought forth by their care for others. How then, I asked, do we speak about such respondents as being altruistic and selfless when they are so forthcoming and resolute about the expressive benefits accruing to them? How can we continue to use the notion of altruism and its connotation of selflessness to account for dispositions and deeds of care that were so clearly an engagement and not an absence of self? Phenomenology trumps philosophy. Ethnography recasts ethics.

Auguste Comte (1852) coined the word “altruism” to capture the ethical orientation that would shape society’s humanitarian stage of development. Comte defines the term as the impetus “to live for others.” Altruism is the obverse of egoism, the baser impetus to pursue self-interest, such as in the ethical formulations of utilitarianism. In Comte’s evolutionary progressivism altruism is the natural outgrowth of human development, and the antidote to utilitarian ethics, whereby individuals pursuing their rational self-interest is said to generate an orderly and virtuous society. Teaching and even imposing altruism was necessary to overcome self-interest in order to institute “the religion of humanity,” where religion is “that state of complete harmony peculiar to human life” (Comte 1852:7).

As I will explain, it is not the absence of self, but the quality of self that we must pay attention to, comment on, and encourage. An example from the contemporary opera, _Les Miserables_, demonstrates the self-fulfillment arising from imparting care. Jean Valjean responds to the dying Fantine’s request to care for her daughter, Cosette. In the broader definition of philanthropy captured by philia as mutual nourishment, Jean Valjean brings Fantine’s daughter, Cosette, under his care. This is a prototypical philanthropic relation. It is a moral biography because Jean Valjean mobilizes resources for purpose. It is philanthropic because Jean Valjean enters a social relationship with Fantine and Cosette, in which he attends directly to them in their needs as a result of experiencing their affective demand. The result is transformative for Jean Valjean and not just his wards. He lost his family when he was first arrested for stealing bread to feed his sister and niece. But as the saga unfolds, Jean Valjean is intimately rewarded with the mythic return to family. With Fantine as his figurative “wife,” Cosette his adopted daughter, and, eventually, Marius (whom he saves
from the barricades) as his son and son-in-law, Jean Valjean recovers the happiness of familial life. Jean Valjean is engaged in friendship love and receives as he gives. He is not selfless; he fulfills his self. In the end I caution against giving too much weight to altruism as providing insight into the ethical responsibilities and actual practices of individuals carrying out a moral biography of *philia*. It is not an absence of self that leads to personal and organized philanthropy. It is a quality of self. And that quality of self is one of identification with those in need as “another myself.” What spurs care is not selfishness, as utilitarianism might have it; nor is it selflessness, as altruism suggests. It is a connected self—one that views others in need as familial. It is familial, says Aristotle, because the earliest experience of reciprocal friendship love is that between parent and child. It is also familial in that extending friendship love to people more distant in time, space, or bloodline is the expansion of those I embrace as myself and my family.

It is possible to redress today’s adulation of altruism to the extent we counter its dismissal of self-love, mutuality, and self-fulfillment as essential elements of its dogma. If we faced only Comte’s formulation of “the great problem for man—viz., how to subordinate egoism to altruism” (1858:262), I would choose altruism. But our interview respondents, Jean Valjean, Aristotle, and our contemporary sociobiology offer something more profound. It is far more intellectually and practically salutary to begin to dislodge the theoretical and linguistic accommodation to altruism and selflessness and instead revere the mutual nourishment of identification as the cardinal philanthropic virtue.

The moral citizenship of care as civil society

To this point I have spoken about the meaning and practice of philanthropy as a moral biography, carried out in both personal assistance and formal organized philanthropy, as rooted in the phenomenology of friendship love of *philia* and care, and thereby entailing the presence of an identified self not the altruistic absence of self. I now draw on these considerations to move from issues revolving around the orientation of individuals to those dealing with the nature of social solidarity and civil society. I heed the counsel of Anthony Giddens (1984) not to turn a duality into a dualism by separating biographical agency from institutional analysis. The moral citizenship of care is ultimately how moral biographies of *philia* become congealed in regularized patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting extend over time and space. As far as I know, no one else has put forward the term “moral citizenship of care” (Schervish and Havens 2002), although subsequently to coining the phrase, I found it to have some affinity to Selznick’s “moral commonwealth” that I cite in the introduction.

I define the moral citizenship of care as the realm of social interactions in which we give priority to the content of citizenship rather than to its processes of access such as in political and economic citizenship. The moral citizenship of care picks up on the issues discussed so far and takes them a step further. Moral citizenship addresses the arena of the moral as we have previously discussed it by taking the social relationships of informal personal philanthropy into account as well as the distinctions between commercial, political, and philanthropic relationships. In regard to the former, the notion of moral citizenship seeks to highlight the daily, often quiet, and generally unmeasured and noneductible direct care for others in addition to organized philanthropy that occurs in, through, or to a formal nonprofit organization. The latter distinction between commercial and political relations, on the one hand, and philanthropic relations, on the other, also grounds the meaning and practice of the moral citizenship of care and its place in creating societal well-being.

Moral citizenship shares with political citizenship a theoretical equality of individuals. In moral citizenship, however, the equality of individuals is not primarily before or under the law. Rather, it is the equivalence of being both a giver and receiver of the mutual nourishment of care and friendship love. If the agency of political citizenship revolves around the rights and duties of building nation and society, the agency of moral citizenship revolves around the inclinations and obligations of providing and receiving care simply because, respectively, we recognize or are recognized in the relationships of affective demand.

This is not to dismiss the importance of political citizenship, just to draw its contract with moral citizenship. Political citizenship, like the political relationships I spoke about as a form of effective demand, can advance the well-being of its members and of others who are not formal members. Nevertheless, political citizenship remains first and foremost a process rather than a content. Both its simple and convoluted processes are capable of producing a content of care for its citizens. However, the constitutional mandates and limits of political citizenship do not make any particular content a priority. Whatever content, salutary or otherwise, it does eventually
provide, derives from and is justified by a moral community, whose most
profound purpose is attending to others in their true needs. The content of
moral citizenship is the source of the mandates for and evaluation of what-
ever political citizenship generates.

Moral citizenship is also more profound in determining the moral content
of a society than is economic citizenship. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*,
Adam Smith [1759] (1759) explains the strengths of economic markets (and
political institutions). But he readily acknowledges that economic demand
and supply, while able to produce utility, cannot be expected to produce
beneficence:

Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants,
from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection; and though
no man in it should owe any obligation, or be bound in gratitude to any
other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices
according to an agreed valuation…Society may subsist, though not in
the most comfortable state, without beneficence. ([1759] 1976:166–167)

The voluntary moral sentiment of beneficence is the disposition of moral
citizenship on its way to fashion a moral commonwealth. For Smith this is
a society with its attention on the process and choosing among utilities.
It is a society where we respond to the privations and injuries of others with
love, gratitude, friendship, and esteem:

All the members of human society stand in need of each other’s assis-
tance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where necessary
assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friend-
ship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. All the different
members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and
affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual
good offices. ([1759] 1976:166)

Taken together, both political and economic citizenship focus foremost
on access to and participation in a process of determination, while moral
citizenship concentrates directly on the content of that determination. We
do, of course, want political and economic citizenship to eventuate in sub-
stantive outcomes that meet our needs. But as I pointed out when defin-
ing philanthropy, political and economic relations do not necessarily meet
people’s needs, since they attend first and foremost to the medium through
which needs are expressed. As such, political and economic citizenship
entail effective demand and are not required nor necessarily disciplined to
meet people’s true needs.

Now moral citizenship does not always and everywhere provide what peo-
ple need. But it always asks that question and should endeavor to discern
deeply what that entails. Even though disagreements about how to attend
to people in their needs are sure to arise among those acting in the sphere
of moral citizenship, the families, gatherings, social movements, organi-
zations, and institutions of the moral citizenship of care remain the most
direct source for directly heeding the entreaty of people in need and in cre-
ating the dispositions, decisions, and deeds for the friendship love of mutual
nourishment.

We can call this the beliefs, feelings, and actions of social solidarity as
long as we recognize there will be no universal agreement. Social solidari-
ity, like altruism, can be a tyranny when it ends up eschewing the diversity that
defines any intentional approach to determining societal morality under the
auspices of liberty and inspiration. The benefit of talking about the moral
citizenship of care is that this appellation denotes for me the Strum
and Drang of all voluntary citizenship.

For several reasons, the notion of moral citizenship makes a practical
ethic for shaping our societal existence. The moral citizenship of care begins
in the tribulations and aspirations surrounding what is close at hand and
extends to an ever-broadening horizon of others in need. Moral citizenship
does not separate the private from the public, the local from the distant.
As the sphere where the moral capital, rather than just economic or politi-
cal capital, develops, the moral citizenship of care works to excavate and
extend the content of what we want to accomplish directly and purposively
for humanity.

Controversies swirl around both the vitality of our civil society and its de-
definition. The moral citizenship of care is the process by which *philia* becomes
inserted into the fiber of civil society. It is the arena and content of social
relations, social movements, family, organizations, churches, and member-
ship groups that attend directly to persons in need, rather than to the media
through which needs are expressed. It is the realm of affective demand. It is
the realm where people act simply because people are in need, not because
they can provide the material media of money or votes or contributions in
order to be revered.

By shifting the theoretical focus to the moral citizenship of care, we can
delineate a positive definition of civil society. It included relations not just
of formal philanthropy but of all behavior trained at expanding the soft affection and rigorous strategy of care—from an infant child to a nation suffering famine.

I do not wish to confront here the lengthy debate about the decline of US civil life as identified and measured by Putnam (2000). But recognizing the broad societal sweep of the moral citizenship of care in all its public and hidden spheres—including the World Bank estimate of $111 billion in 2011 sent from the US residents mostly to people in need overseas (Harris and Provost 2013)—is to understand civil society.

I agree with Everett Carll Ladd (1999) and most recently David Horton Smith (2013) that the realm of social care is so much more extensive and intensive than Putnam’s observations about a “silent withdrawal from social intercourse” (2000:115). Understanding moral citizenship as the defining characteristic of civil society leads us to value the full range of direct care, including private voluntary assistance on behalf of friends and family, and those who are more distant in time, space, and kinship. Second, moral citizenship requires that researchers study to a fuller range of caring behavior than what take place in, to, or through nonprofit organizations. Third, when coupled with the dynamics of identification and friendship love, we need not be bashful about honoring those acts of care that we carry out within our personal sphere. For they become generative allies rather than obstacles for advancing the expanse of a society’s philia.

Conclusion

Elaborating the meaning of the moral biography highlights the way individuals determine their agency by mobilizing latent capacities according to a normative purpose. In doing so it enables us to hone in on the meaning of morality in a formal way without a particular content. In turning to the moral biography of care, I add a substantive moral content. If a generic moral biography mobilizes resources in the light of a purpose, a moral biography of care mobilizes resources in the service of philia, that friendship love of mutual nourishment that attends to the true needs of others.

I am agnostic about the particular concerns that comprise other people’s vocation of care. We are all to be engaged in activating our resources on behalf of philia. Any case for or against other people’s particular expressions of morality requires an argument about just why or why not the set of consequences of those people’s choices advance or deter the flourishing of human beings and the material world that encompasses us. In setting out the dynamics of philia and care I developed a positive definition of philanthropy as the personal and organizational realms in which we attend directly to people in their needs. It is the realm of affective rather than effective demand.

The meaning and practice of altruism as selflessness, I argue, is no more convincing than the opposite reductionist proposition of utilitarian self-interest. I move beyond both selflessness and selfishness by describing the more theoretically useful and phenomenologically accurate notion of the identified or connected self. What spurs care is that individuals attend to the fulfillment of others and themselves at the same time, as we see in tribulations and triumphs of Jean Valjean.

Just as we conceive morality more accurately as a biography and eschew altruism of absence of self in favor of a connected self, we may better capture the societal dimensions of morality as the moral citizenship of care. Such moral citizenship is broader and more diverse than that of social solidarity. While the latter term may be popular, it does not point beyond itself to the beneficence Adam Smith calls for as a step up in the quality of social life. Neither does it readily lead us to consider affective demand as the defining characteristic of civil society. Nor does it and point toward intimate and familial, as well as certain organizational sites, as the locale of civil society. Morality plays out in the moral biography and moral citizenship of care; self-identification out explains selfless altruism; and affective demand provides a more robust definition of civil society than social solidarity.

Notes

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