

Against Philanthropy, Individual and Corporate

Neil Levy

Etymologically, "philanthropy" is the opposite of "misanthropy." The first refers to the love of humanity, the second to hatred of it. That ought to be sufficient evidence to convince anyone that philanthropy ought to be supported. How could anyone oppose such a noble activity as the love of humanity, or, more accurately, the giving which is motivated by such love? Even to contemplate opposition seems to convict one of misanthropy or worse. Moreover, to advocate such opposition is hardly rational, let alone ethical. Yet that is precisely the task I wish to undertake here: to advocate opposition to philanthropy. More precisely, I will argue that both corporate donors and individuals ought not engage in at least a certain class of philanthropic activities.

What's so Good About Philanthropy?

I suspect that the very question sounds strange to most people. They think that philanthropy is so obviously good that it does not require a defense. Nevertheless, in this section I enumerate the kind of reasons we might have for thinking that philanthropy is a good thing. These reasons can conveniently be divided into three classes, depending upon who or what is supposed to benefit from philanthropy. That is, we might think that philanthropy is good because it benefits the *recipient*, the *donor*, or the

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