of early ventures among Native Americans, moralistic imperialism among human services, William Aramony and United Way, etc.—apparently to denigrate all of philanthropy. In concluding several pages, he proposes, as an alternative, “social movements” and “public social welfare” (as if these do not have their own problems) without bothering to provide substantive or procedural details.

But of course philanthropy—private initiatives for public good, focusing on quality of life—has made far more profound and beneficent contributions to American history than are acknowledged in this small book. Wagner does not come close to mortally wounding his target because he attacks only a few sore-thumb extremities, while ignoring the vital organs: namely, the philanthropic impulse (voluntary public benefaction) and its many successes achieved (needs met) by small charities with dedicated, heroic, underpaid and overworked professional staff. American philanthropy may not have produced social transformation of the kind sought by Wagner, but the great reform movements that have transformed American life—e.g., anti-slavery, private education, religion, the American Revolution itself, feminism, environmentalism, anti-nuclear weapons and human rights—were all philanthropy in action. In that larger context, Wagner’s cavils are small peanuts indeed.

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