INVESTING IN THE IDEAS OF LIBERTY

Reflections on the Philanthropic Enterprise in Higher Education

Lenore T. Ealy
Executive Director, The Philanthropic Enterprise

We must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure, a deed of courage. . . . Unless we can make the philosophic foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue, and its implementation a task which challenges the ingenuity and imagination of our liveliest minds, the prospects of freedom are indeed dark.

F. A. Hayek
"The Intellectuals and Socialism" (1949)

During the past twenty years, fueled by a growing sense of crisis about the deterioration and politicization of university curricula, many donors inspired to renew the philosophic foundations of a free society have focused their philanthropy on efforts to encourage reform at colleges and universities across the nation. Donors have supported individual scholars, funded research, supported student organizations, encouraged specific curricular offerings, and established academic centers on campus in an effort to ensure that classical liberal ideas—which encompass a commitment to the best traditions of a liberal arts education—are not lost.

These efforts have met with greater and lesser success (and more or less entrenched resistance), contingent upon numerous factors, including the stature and quality of the personnel involved, the political climate at each campus, the strategic clarity with which money has been invested, and the extent to which universities have respected donor intent. With significant philanthropic funding targeting higher education reform of some kind, it is pertinent to ask whether and how private giving to today's institutions of higher education can strategically align with the task of rejuvenating the philosophic foundations of a free society.

Classical liberalism largely underwent a rebirth as an intellectual movement in America in the mid 20th century, in part as a reaction against the expansion of government power under the Progressives by a motley alliance that became known as the Old Right and in part as a consequence of geopolitical turmoil which brought first-hand understanding of the threats of various forms of totalitarianism to bear on the American mind. During the interwar and post-World War II period, European and Russian exiles, including Ludwig von Mises, F. A. Hayek, Ayn Rand, and others became U.S. residents and had a significant impact. The popular successes of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* and Rand's

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

The Fountainhead were important events in the revival and popularization of classical liberalism at mid-century. From the growing concern for the fate of liberty in the post-New Deal, Cold War world emerged a group of businessmen who organized their philanthropy to support the intellectual foundations of the classical liberal movement. Thus classical liberal philanthropy was born.

We may define classical liberal philanthropy as that philanthropy that seeks to understand, restate, and amplify the philosophic foundations of a free society and to ground social institutions (including traditional charitable activities) on these philosophic principles. Hayek's seminal essay, "The Intellectuals and Socialism" (1949) was a guidestar for many of the early classical liberal donors. The essay was foremost a reflection on the production and diffusion of ideas. Hayek focused attention on two groups of people, the scholars who define the philosophical foundations and the intellectuals by whose efforts ideas spread. Hayek brought much needed attention to the role of intellectuals: "It is the intellectuals…who decide what views and opinions are to reach us, which facts are important enough to be told to us, and in what form and from what angle they are to be presented. Whether we shall ever learn of the results of the work of the expert and the original thinker depends mainly on their decision." In Hayek's account, the free society needed crucial support in two areas: support for those investigating, restating and amplifying its ideals and support for the effort to convert the intellectuals from a belief in the principles of socialism to a belief in these ideals, which explicitly repudiated the possibility of an "all-comprehensive system of values." (see *The Road to Serfdom*, 165)

One might think that it would have been natural to turn to America's institutions of higher education as institutional vehicles for this work, but surprisingly the first generation of classical liberal philanthropists did not look much to colleges and universities as allies in the intellectual tasks they faced. By that time the universities were already largely the creatures of Progressivism. Progressivism, often conceiving itself as a vehicle of "scientific philanthropy," sought to mobilize all social institutions under a banner of broad scale social reform led by a technocratic elite with strong ties to the administrative state. America's colleges and universities had long been viewed as a training ground for this elite, and in the early twentieth century, American universities increasingly became laboratories, not only for advancing knowledge of the natural sciences but also for social reform. With the passage of the Pendleton Act of 1883 in the wake of the assassination of President Garfield by a disgruntled job seeker, the umbilical cord from America's top tier universities to the Federal Civil Service became more firmly tethered. The flow of the educated elite to Washington accelerated in the first half of the twentieth century to keep pace with the demand for personnel to staff World War I bureaus and then the New Deal agencies. Federal funding for research flowed in increasing amounts in the other direction. The historical autonomy of higher education increasingly gave way to a new breed of "public-private partnership" in progressive reform.

Gradually, academic purpose, public policy, and philanthropy became entangled in unprecedented ways, diminishing the role of colleges and universities as independent

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

institutions of civil society and turning them instead into instrumentalities of statecraft. The conquest of higher education by the state steadily advanced after World War II, marked by two great leaps forward in Federal expenditures and entanglements in higher education: the GI Bill (1944) provided access to college for vast numbers of returning servicemen, and the Soviet launch of Sputnik spurred Federal infusions of cash for science education through the National Defense Education Act (1958). In his 1961 farewell address, President Dwight Eisenhower cautioned Americans about the future of higher education:

> Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers. The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded. (http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/indust.html)

In 1965, however, heedless of Eisenhower's warning, Congress passed a new Higher Education Act authorizing the game changing scale of Federal government involvement in the student aid business. By the early 1970s, Federal funding comprised the overwhelming majority of aid to postsecondary students, displacing the role and influence of philanthropic funding in higher education.

The opportunities for classical liberal influence in this world were fading quickly. In the concept paper (1961) that outlined the future work of the Institute for Humane Studies, F. A. "Baldy" Harper, Volker Fund staffer and IHS founder observed:

> Any attempt to establish a hard core libertarian development on campus, especially since it is a very small minority, would be anathema to the dominant factions in even the best of these institutions. The colleges and universities should be kept on terms as friendly as possible, of course, for whatever cooperation can be developed in temporary and limited ways by continuous trading.

Harper, working closely with Hayek and numerous other scholars and business leaders, held to a firm pragmatism that recognized the limited possibility for advancing liberty through colleges and universities:

> We must face the fact that—due to the nature of the job of education for Liberalism—the main center of strategy development, stimulation, and training of a hard core apparently must be outside the formal halls of learning. This always tends to be true of any minority concept, and above all this is true of liberalism in our time. The formal institutions of learning have their center of gravity

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

> elsewhere, and the "protection of the institution" operates to censor in one way or another most of the effective work for liberalism.

Re-kindling a widespread belief in liberty and a confidence in the creative powers of a free people in the years after World War II would have to be accomplished largely outside of the society's predominant educational institutions. The core strategy of the donors who sought to revive classical liberal philosophy thus became one of investing primarily in people and private institutions. Essential in the development of this strategy was the William F. Volker Fund, which sought to identify and support scholars working to understand the history, theory and practice of the free society. The Relm, later Earhart, Foundation played a similar role in these years. (Earhart's philanthropy continues even now, though it will cease operations in the middle of our present decade.)

The staffs of these funds developed a "search and amplify" strategy for identifying scholars whose work was advancing on (or at least not contradictory to) the principles of methodological individualism. Volker employed "readers," including Murray Rothbard, Rose Wilder Lane, Frank Meyer, and others to scan scholarly literature and identify authors whose work was already tending to take up lines of inquiry compatible with classical liberalism. A Volker staff member would travel to meet these individuals and assess their talent and potential contributions to the understanding of the free society. When they deemed support worthwhile, it was made quietly to sustain the scholarly work rather than to draw attention to the Volker Fund's philanthropy per se.

The Relm and Earhart Foundations implemented a similar strategy through their network of scholars who served to identify promising candidates for research fellowships. Volker, Relm, and Earhart sought to identify the most talented graduate students and scholars working to understand the free society and ensure that their work could proceed, whether or not they had faculty appointments. These funders understood (with Hayek) that people are the primary bearers of ideas and the key vectors of their transmission.

Pierre Goodrich, who established Liberty Fund as an operating foundation in 1961, shared this general outlook favoring support for scholars and scholarship over academic institutions. Goodrich had a long relationship with Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, but could find few ways to secure the intent of his philanthropy in the context of the college organization. In *The Liberty Fund Basic Memorandum*, his statement of the philosophical principles that would guide the work of Liberty Fund, Goodrich expressed his belief that a fruitful use of the Fund's resources would be "freeing the time of people who already have a tendency to work in the direction of the ideal of the Liberty Fund and who are surrounded by an atmosphere which would more likely make their work successful" (38).

Goodrich was clearheaded about the persistent tensions between individual liberties and organization power, however, and he astutely observed that potential grantees employed by colleges "should have the cooperation at least of the Dean: and preferably of the Dean, the President, and the heads of the departments in the area in which they are working" (38). Such an atmosphere, uniting responsible governance, administration and

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

scholarship was not to be hoped for at many institutions of higher education, unfortunately.

By the 1980s, the John M. Olin Foundation was having more success in generating "gains from trade" with the universities. In *A Time for Truth* (1978), Olin's president, former Treasury Secretary William Simon, called for a new counterintelligentsia to challenge the prevailing statist winds in higher education and media. This work needed scholars and intellectuals "dedicated consciously to the political value of individual liberty, above all, which understands its relationship to meritocracy, and which is consciously aware of the value of private property and the free market in generating innovative technology, jobs, and wealth." By targeting specific scholarly areas, such as the emerging field of law and economics, the Olin Foundation was able to establish tightly focused programs and campus-affiliated centers across the country that made a major impact on scholarly research and American institutions.

The work to reclaim the philosophical principles of the free society by foundations such as Volker, Earhart, Relm, Olin, Liberty Fund and others gave rise, naturally, to diverse strategies, but they shared the tactical work of advancing serious scholarship and publication in the classical liberal vein and promulgating a rich and sometimes contentious conversation among classical liberal, conservative, agrarian, anarchist, libertarian and neo-conservative scholars. In the pre-internet era, these efforts—modest in scale compared to the budgets of giants such as the Rockefeller, Ford, Russell Sage and Carnegie foundations—succeeded in creating a rich social network of scholars, thinkers, and activists working to define and advance the ideas of liberty.

The support of scholars, where they could be found, and the eventual development of independent research institutes and think tanks to further the renaissance of classical liberal intellectual discourse, was largely a successful two-prong strategy. Former Volker Fund officer Richard Cornuelle used to reflect that members of the early libertarian movement could fit in a phone booth. By the end of the twentieth century, classical liberal scholarship had its own journals in numerous fields and there was tremendous diversification and specialization of think tanks and research institutes working to advance the philosophical ideals of the free society and to work out the policy implications of these ideals.

We must nevertheless ask today whether these philanthropic efforts improved the prospects for tackling much needed root-and-branch reform in the contemporary university. With a growing number of scholars working in classical liberal streams of thought and holding academic teaching and research positions, it may seem at first glance that the time is ripe for classical liberal philanthropists to undertake the daunting task of reform in higher education. In choosing higher education as a field of philanthropic endeavor, however, the donor enters a terrain still largely dominated by progressive ideology (and worse) and further polluted by the economics of state higher education funding and policy. In such an environment, where philanthropy can generate unintended and adverse consequences that shore up institutional corruption, donors and their agents

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

must carefully assess the prospects for reform by understanding the nature of what they seek to reform as well as the meaning of reform itself.

Reform may be either progressive or conservative in nature. As a progressive activity reform originates in an instrumental view of human institutions--and persons--as things malleable by policy, whether crafted by statesmen or devised by high-minded donors. In *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (1952), Hayek described the progressive, scientistic attitude: "From the belief that nothing which has not been consciously designed can be useful or even essential to the achievement of human purposes, it is an easy transition to the belief that since all institutions have been made by man, we must have complete power to refashion them in any way we desire." Progressive reform, embracing the belief that social institutions (and the very social order itself) can be reshaped to serve a collective purpose, thus lends itself to continual reformism. As the purposes of one hegemonic group give way to another, institutions are often turned into battlegrounds where the winner takes the spoils. Like conscience under Hobbes' Leviathan, education in a regime of progressive reformism is whatever the current Hegemon says it must be. These successive regimes typically subordinate all other values to the supreme task of possessing political power or of whispering Rasputin-like into the ear of the Prince.

As a conserving activity, by contrast, reform recognizes, in the apt phrasing of Adam Ferguson, that human institutions are always "the result of human choice but not human design." Conserving, or classical liberal, reform recognizes the plurality of objectives and concerns instantiated in human traditions and institutions, including educational institutions, and embraces the autonomy of such institutions as a critical means of advancing the practices of human cooperation. As Edward Shils put it in *The Virtue of Civility*, classical liberalism recognizes that "no theoretical system of a hierarchy of virtues is ever realizable in practice," (52) thus conserving reform tends to see real education as a discovery process, a participation, in Michael Oakeshott's apt phrase, in the conversation of mankind, whereby students come to explore with one another and with more experienced guides (their professors) the whole realm of what it means to be human, to experience humility before the unknown, and to grow into a moral and intellectual capacity for living a free, responsible, and peaceful life in community with others.

The possibilities of conserving reform in the current environment of higher education seem dim. The increasing imposition of centralized policymaking and the demands of institutional accreditation tied to Federal funding have largely turned American colleges and universities into handmaidens of social and political reformism. This transformation of the relationship between the campus and the Federal government has been accompanied by an increasing politicization within many scholarly disciplines.

Traditional donors have continued to give to their alma maters and to favored research programs, to powerhouse athletic programs, and to buildings that will bear the name of the donor until, perhaps, a higher bidder comes along, but this philanthropy has largely been motivated more by school loyalty than by a careful consideration of how the educational enterprise of a particular institution is serving to conserve the philosophical

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

principles and civic virtues upon which America's freedom and prosperity depend. As donors have voted with dollars for their favored college, a vast amount of philanthropic giving has shored up the collective fiction that the emperor is still wearing the old school colors loyally.

Self-tasked with preserving the philosophical foundations of a free society, however, classical liberal philanthropists have a duty to consider very carefully whether any resources fed into the hungry maw of a college or university today will have any favorable impacts on the beast's constitution. The classical liberal donor must look outside the good he would do with any particular program at any particular college and consider the specific institutional conditions and the broader context in which his philanthropy will be consumed.

A principled skepticism about the prospects of institutional reform in today's universities may be the best tool a classical liberal donor can bring to bear on the problem of higher education. Classical liberal thought itself supplies philosophical foundations for a cautious and considered approach. In 1971, Pierre Goodrich and Wabash College economist and Liberty Fund director Benjamin Rogge co-authored a position paper on "Education in a Free Society." Here they undertook a bold thought experiment: "We begin by assuming a society in which the state plays no part in the educational process. Gone would be all state colleges and universities, all public elementary and secondary schools, all public libraries and public opera houses, and so forth" (70). This thought experiment was no mere economist's fancy of cost/benefit analysis, however, but sought to elevate the discussion to moral premises, arguing that the current educational arrangements in the U.S. were "grossly inefficient, inequitable, contrary to human rights, contrary to human nature, and destructive of the society of free and responsible men" (92). In the *Basic Memorandum*, Goodrich had stated that "a decentralized free and competitive educational society" was one of the three legs of the stool upon which the possibility of limited government rested, the other two being "a decentralized, free, and competitive market economy (both in things and labor)" and "a decentralized free and competitive church and religious society" (19). The expansive control of Federal and state governments over the educational enterprise at all levels was, on Rogge's and Goodrich's account, anathema to a fundamental requirement of a free society that "definitions of purpose lie wholly within the jurisdiction of the individuals involved." (Rogge and Goodrich, 62)

Where does such a radical framework leave the classical liberal philanthropist today in regard to funding reform in higher education? For the most part, American colleges and universities have departed far from the ideal of the college as an autonomous center of civility and learning, as a community of scholars and learners oriented around an intergenerational contract of intellectual and moral integrity. On the modern college campus the pursuit of learning as a liberal art, an art befitting a free human being, has largely given way to a world in which administrators worry primarily about accreditation, compliance, and fundraising; formative young adults are enlisted in social reform or left to social, sexual, and chemical experimentation; and professors thrive on patronage and tenure. Despite these conditions, and often because of them, a new generation of

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

classical liberal donors has begun to devote attention to postsecondary campuses as sites for possible reclamation. The question remains whether this is a philanthropic strategy that can succeed, and whether, in the end, it will help promote liberty.

So, what's a classical liberal donor to do in a domain of such peril? A few categorical suggestions come to mind.

<u>Promote the ideal</u>. The re-creation of higher education as a landscape of diverse and autonomous centers of learning and vibrant centers of civil society would ultimately require us to de-link education and research from Federal and its associated centralized rule-making from Washington, D.C. Colleges and universities would need to forego all forms of public funding, and state legislatures would need to devolve control of state universities to private university corporations. Such movement toward the free society would require us to forge a culture of philanthropy that disavows the temptations of progressive social and institutional reform as well as the temptations of crony capitalism and instead bets its resources on the creative powers of a free people. Realism dictates, unfortunately, that Americans, with a tendency to conservative reform even of institutions grown perverse, are not likely to abolish or de-fund the state universities anytime soon. This mostly leaves space for classical liberal philanthropists to try to demonstrate that alternative educational institutions can succeed. Classical liberal donors could begin to help at least a few private colleges and universities reclaim their status as independent entities, much as Grove City College and Hillsdale College have done. Establishing new colleges committed to abjuring state funds could also be a positive step in the right direction.

<u>Provide the gift of an interval</u>. A philanthropy that seeks to renew higher education as bearer of the philosophic and institutional conditions of a free society might also help students graduate from college in a timely manner, unburdened by either ideology or student loan debt. Michael Oakeshott described undergraduate education as "the gift of an interval," a period in which a young scholar has the privilege of a moment "surrounded by all the inherited learning and literature and experience of our civilization; not alone, but in the company of kindred spirits; not as a sole occupation, but combined with the discipline of studying a recognized branch of learning; and neither as a first step in education (for those wholly ignorant of how to behave or think) nor as a final education to fit a man for the day of judgment, but as a middle." (Oakeshott, 114) Oakeshott is clear to note that this interval should not be one that over-consumes scarce resources of time and energy. When undergraduate degree production is measured against a 6-year standard, as it is today, and the average undergraduate education costs more than a family home, we are clearly not providing students with a gift of an interval but with burden that they must carry for years into their delayed adulthood. Scholarship programs designed as a reward for student merit wherever it arises rather than as social welfare (increasing college access across the board) are important philanthropic traditions. Such scholarship programs may need to be carefully developed and administered not by college financial aid offices but as direct awards to students selected according to the donor's criteria.

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

Related to this issue is the need to be clear-headed about who should be attending college. The belief that a college education is an American entitlement has consistently been exploited to justify increased Federal involvement in higher education. The most recent instance of this being the Obama administration's overhaul of the nation's student loan programs. These sorts of policy fixes to sustain unrealistic expectations are likely to do more harm than good. PayPal co-founder, venture capitalist and philanthropist Peter Thiel generated quite a buzz in 2011 when he opined that the housing bubble had been replaced by a higher education bubble. "A true bubble," Thiel observed, "is when something is overvalued and intensely believed." Common sense on this matter may not be catching on in Washington, DC, but American families are beginning to understand the bill of goods they are being asked to purchase. Colleges and universities have learned how to spend more money to help students accomplish less. Surely for many young adults there may be more direct and cost effective paths to vocational (and life) success than a college education. It's time we began to talk more about what a college education is really for.

Weigh the costs of reform against the opportunities of entrepreneurship. Classical liberal philanthropists may want to engage in efforts to reform both public policy and college curricula, but these efforts should be approached strategically and pragmatically, as they may both overtax the time and money the donor has available and yield only marginal gains. There is yet little hope that the costs of college education can be reined in through public policy reform and the transaction costs of even small gains in this area will be high. The small and often embattled classical liberal centers and programs being established on many campuses can fill in the holes left by degraded curricula and ideologically driven faculty for only a small proportion of students on most campuses. A more effective way to control costs, promote sound curricula and classical liberal pedagogy, and ensure that most matriculating students complete their degree in four years may be to establish competitive colleges or independent educational institutes built from the ground up on the old traditions of liberal learning and the new possibilities provided by technology. At the very least, we need an environment where new institutional models are being developed and tested on a continual basis.

Finally, and perhaps best of all, classical liberal philanthropists might set the stage to do all of the above by renewing the traditions of associational liberty and self-governance. "The hallmark of a civil society," wrote Shils, "is the autonomy of private associations and institutions, as well as that of private business firms. Alongside of business firms, there are moral, religious and intellectual institutions and societies, as well as civic and political associations" (330). In the final analysis, the re-creation of higher education as a sphere of education for liberty will require a restoration of colleges and universities as autonomous centers of education and cultural transmission. The classical liberal philanthropist should eagerly promote institutional pluralism, which will require respecting the autonomy of educational organizations (perhaps even when they themselves do not understand it or exercise it well). Whether this means starting anew or bringing the right pressures to bear on existing institutions, it is likely that meaningful re-formation will come only when colleges and universities—trustees, faculties, students, and benefactors together—embrace the task of re-creating themselves from within,

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

hearkening to the deeper traditions of civility and enlightenment and enterprise characteristic of a self-governing society.

In a recent symposium in *Society* on "Dictatorship and Scholarship," Peter Baehr suggests that the crisis of higher education has arisen primarily because colleges and universities themselves have lost sight of their core mission: "the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship, and the practice of teaching, within a bounded intellectual community." Unable to define itself, the American university has, in the words of Jacques Barzun, "put itself at the mercy of many publics, unknown to one another and contradictory in their demands." Unfortunately the modern university is less often a happy band of intellectual brothers and more often a cacophonous and insatiable creature that has lost any core understanding of its enterprise.

The ideal of higher education as first and foremost a world of self-governing intellectual societies partaking of the tradition of the *collegium* creates significant challenges for philanthropists interested in institutional reform. No campus is an island, and wide access to liberal education has long been possible primarily through benefactions, but donors must consider whether and how they will respect the self-determination of an association of scholar-educators who come to articulate an educational mission for their association. (I set aside here the question of public universities, of course, where such educational missions have more intersection with state legislative processes) Philanthropists may have specific, and sometimes eccentric, intentions about the desired use of their benefactions that won't necessarily align with the mission a college has set for itself. Even a philanthropist possessed of the best ideas must recognize that the culture of philanthropy, no less than the culture of the state, may compromise liberty by compromising the necessary respect for the free associations of civil society. The unhappy paradox is that to the extent that donors seek to direct to utilitarian or political or ideological ends the scholarly conversation within a voluntary community, they may also compromise the fundamental nature of liberal education and of the free society. The classical liberal philanthropist may have a special burden to recall institutions of higher education to the responsible exercise of their associational liberties, but this burden will require great humility and self-restraint.

Self-awareness on the part of the donor is an essential philanthropic virtue, but integrity on the part of any association that wishes to be responsibly self-governing is also required. Some of the most articulate defenders of the ideal of liberal education caution educational institutions against accepting gifts promiscuously. Oakeshott suggested that "a university which has power to refuse a benefaction thought to be eccentric to its character must, when it exercises that power, have some sense of its own character and identity." (Oakeshott, 130) Barzun goes beyond Oakeshott in urging not only that universities must jealously protect their own purpose and identity from the anti-intellectualism of much modern philanthropy, but that our culture itself will suffer if it fails to sustain a "knowledge of the nature and conditions of intellectual life" (*The House of Intellect*, 196). The classical liberal philanthropist must celebrate the voluntary, but will do well, too, to recall Barzun's warning: "When in the realm of the voluntary

everything is done for the wrong reason, with irrelevant motives and illusory hopes, none of the ordinary benefits can accrue, and none of the extraordinary ones either" (195).

Whether the classical liberal philanthropist can help a university rise to a higher standard of internal integrity in aligning governance and mission, at the very least, he must consciously reflect on the life of the mind and the ideal nature of the institutions that promote it. In *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek pointed out that the road to freedom requires respect for truth and its pursuit:

> This interaction of individuals, possessing different knowledge and different views, is what constitutes the life of thought. The growth of reason is a social process based on the existence of such differences. It is of its essence that its results cannot be predicted, that we cannot know which views will assist this growth and which will not—in short, that this growth cannot be governed by any views which we now possess without at the same time limiting it. To 'plan' or 'organize' the growth of mind, or, for that matter, progress in general, is a contradiction in terms. (165)

It would be hard to compose a more eloquent statement of the ideal principle of liberal education itself.

The philanthropic enterprise in higher education, ideally for every philanthropist, but most especially for the classical liberal philanthropist, should be foremost a personal intellectual enterprise. We desperately need private philanthropy as a competitor and counterweight to the power of the Federal purse, but those who would undertake this philanthropy wisely must at some level seek to participate in the intellectual enterprise they would support. And they must both respect and model the principle of responsible self-governance. As Richard Cornuelle observed, "private philanthropy exists as an alternative not because private boards are inherently wiser and more sensible than Congress or a federal bureaucracy, but because they have a million more chances to be wise." When no boards (university or foundation or nonprofit or corporate), and thus no self-governing institutions, remain free of state control, our society will be in serious jeopardy, and we seem to be nearing that dangerous precipice. But "control" can also come in more seemingly benign forms through philanthropic benefactions. The classical liberal philanthropist cannot rest solely on the rights of donor intent, which always entails the perils of eccentricity, but must constantly consider whether his intent embodies the principles of classical liberalism and can be realized through classical liberal means. As the first principle of classical liberal social analysis is to start, as Hayek enjoined, with "the concepts which guide individuals in their actions," so the first principle of classical liberal philanthropy in higher education may be to ensure that individuals of merit have adequate resources to associate freely in communities devoted to the highest standards of scholarship and intellectual life, whether or not these communities offer accredited degrees and recognized credentials. Rogge and Goodrich wrote in "Education in a Free Society": "The task of educating individuals for freedom, if done at all, will be best done by *private* agencies and institutions, manned by individuals deeply committed to that cause."

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011

Perhaps the discovery of the best arrangements for higher education will come when classical liberal philanthropists find ways to reward scholarly merit and initiative and to create congenial spaces, characterized by the happy responsibilities and liberties of self-governance rather than the dismal burden of academic politics, spaces where our liveliest minds can seek both to understand our past and to devise new ways of conveying to future generations a love of liberty in theory and practice.

References

Baehr, Peter (2011). "Purity and Danger in the Modern University," *Society* 48: 297-300.

Barzun, Jacques. (1959). *The House of Intellect*. New York: Harper and Brothers. Harper Torchbooks ed., 1961.

Cornuelle, Richard (1983). *Healing America*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons

Goodrich, Pierre F. (1961). *Liberty Fund Basic Memorandum*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.

Hayek, F. A. (1944). *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Paperback edition, 1956.

__________ (1949/1990). "The Intellectuals and Socialism," The University of Chicago Law Review, Vol. 16, No 3. Reprinted by The Institute for Humane Studies, 1990.

_________ (1952). *The Counter-Revolution of Science*. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press. Liberty Fund edition, 1979

Oakeshott, Michael (1950). "The Idea of a University." Reprinted in *The Voice of Liberal Learning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. Liberty Fund edition, 2001.

Rogge, Benjamin A. and Pierre F. Goodrich. (1973). "Education in a Free Society," in *Education in a Free Society*, Anne Husted Burleigh, ed. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.

Shils, Edward. (1997). *The Virtue of Civility: Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society*, ed. Steven Grosby. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.

© Lenore T. Ealy 2011