

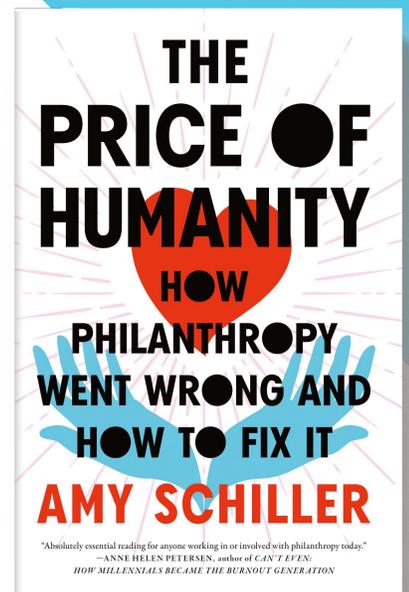
THE PRICE OF HUMANITY

How Philanthropy Went Wrong—And How to Fix It

Amy Schiller

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“ Schiller presents a hopeful vision of philanthropy and society... Thoughtful, timely reading, both intelligent and humane.”
— **Kirkus Reviews**

“ Absolutely essential reading for anyone working in or involved in philanthropy today.” — **Anne Helen Petersen, author of *Can't Even: How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation***

NOTE TO THE READER

An attempt to rescue philanthropy from its progressive decline into vanity projects that drive wealth inequality, so that it may support human flourishing as originally intended.

Journalist, academic and consultant Amy Schiller shows how we get out of this stalemate by evaluating the history of philanthropy from St. Augustine to LeBron James. She argues philanthropy’s contemporary tendency to maintain obscene inequality and reduce every cause to dehumanizing technocratic terms is unacceptable, while maintaining an optimism about the soul and potential of philanthropy in principle.

For philanthropy to get back to its literal roots—the love of humanity—Schiller argues that philanthropy can no longer be premised around basic survival. Public institutions must assume that burden so that philanthropy can shift its focus to initiatives that allow us to flourish into happier, more fulfilled human beings. Philanthropy has to get out of the business of saving lives if we are to save humanity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Schiller celebrates several objects and places that exemplify ideal philanthropy – libraries, cathedrals, bikes. What are the threads that connect them? How do they express love of humanity?
2. Which of the individuals profiled in *The Price of Humanity* resonated most with you? What made them compelling?
3. At the start of the book, Schiller describes fundraising appeals that sensationalize poverty and desperation. What kinds of fundraising appeals motivate you to give? Do you agree with Schiller’s critique?
4. Schiller identifies several trends in contemporary philanthropy, including an emphasis on demonstrating quantifiable impact and donors who see their giving as another investment, meant to generate a return. Do these trends resonate with your experience with nonprofits?

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5. Throughout the book, Schiller argues that philanthropy, while in many ways dependent on capitalism, can also be a way of undermining the utilitarian demands of capitalism. Do you agree with this argument?
6. Schiller recommends “an integrated, multivalent relationship with wealth,” one where “strong taxation and social welfare policies...address poverty, but philanthropy [funds]...luxuries that become sources of joy and meaning.” How would you balance government funding and philanthropy? Do you agree with Schiller’s “separate spheres” proposal?
7. In her study of LeBron James and Jane Addams, Schiller examines how race and gender influence philanthropists’ public personas. How do you think philanthropy is different for people from marginalized backgrounds?
8. Schiller takes readers to locations big and small – Notre Dame cathedral, community gardens, Grand Central station, local parks and walking trails, the atrium of a midwestern art museum. She describes how they “make us feel at home in the world.” What are some spaces in your community that have this effect?
9. What do the examples of the Statue of Liberty pedestal and Notre Dame cathedral tell us about the potential of small-dollar giving? What is the broader significance of small-dollar fundraising successes?
10. In Chapter 8, Schiller proposes three phases for “fixing” philanthropy. Would you change anything about her plan? What would you add or adjust?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Schiller is a journalist, academic, and consultant. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Dartmouth College in the Society of Fellows. She previously held fellowships at Stanford University and Bard College. Her writing has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *The Nation*, and *The Daily Beast* and has been quoted as an expert on philanthropy in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Bloomberg*, and *Slate*. She has also had a nearly 15-year career in major gift fundraising consulting. She has worked in a wide range of settings, from international humanitarian nonprofits to a major New York City dance company.

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