

# Ethics of Philanthropy in the Modern World

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### 1. Introduction

Human life in the modern world is changing with ever increasing speed. However, there are some global trends which remain quite stable: economic and social inequality is growing in many parts of the world; needs of society are becoming more complex and the living conditions of many people are deteriorating. Quite often, state governments are not able to cope independently with social problems due to their novelty, peculiarity, high cost or a combination of all these factors. In this situation private philanthropy comes to the fore not only as an important tool for addressing inequality but also as a remarkable source of social innovation.

In fact, philanthropy today is a self-developing and growing mechanism for redistributing private wealth in the world. In some countries, the aggregate budget of charitable programs is a significant share of the economy: for example, in the USA (one of the largest economy in the world, which is also a “trend setter” in principles and development models of philanthropy), the total philanthropic sector value accounts for 2% of GDP <sup>(i)</sup>. Besides USA, the top three countries in terms of charitable giving by individuals as a percentage of GDP are the United States of America, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom.

However, philanthropy is not limited to the Western world: two of the BRICS countries (Russia and India) appear in the Top 10 of countries analyzed, indicating the potential of transitional economies to be future leaders in providing charitable resources <sup>(ii)</sup>. Furthermore, although philanthropy may not yet be so well developed in developing countries but it may be even more powerful tool in solving social issues and tackling inequality in these countries than in the developed world <sup>(iii)</sup>.

Thus, the role of philanthropy as an economic and social phenomenon in many countries of the world is not only noticeable, but is also steadily growing, especially in transitional economies.

However, because of the voluntary nature of private donations, philanthropy has an important moral and ethical dimension.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, philanthropy is «The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes» meaning that philanthropic actions, programs, ideas, initiatives are based on desires and are determined by the moral principles and attitudes of specific people. That is why the study of philanthropic ethics plays such an important role in understanding the essence of philanthropy and forecasting its future impact in the development of modern society.

Modern philanthropy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with a long history. On the one hand, it has long, often religious, roots in many societies; generosity is considered one of the important human virtues since the time of the ancient philosophers. On the other hand, in recent years natural-science studies of the evolutionary nature of altruism have been published. Furthermore in many countries, modern philanthropy, in addition to the individual manifestation of virtue and the desire to help your neighbour, began to play a more systematic role not only in social but also in business field: in particular, the principles of philanthropy became an integral part of the business ethics of companies, ensuring the loyalty of employees and customers and ultimately developing business itself.

Taking into account the complexity of this phenomenon, for the purposes of this work I have selected for consideration the following aspects, which, in my opinion, can shed light on various aspects of the ethics of modern philanthropy.

- First, I examined the general approach to the ethics of virtues, and in particular, generosity in classical philosophers: this helped me to substantiate which approaches are still relevant for modern society.

- Secondly, I examined the cultural and religious roots of philanthropy using examples from a few countries and then I tried to determine the extent to which religious and other traditions determine the current situation in these selected countries.

- Thirdly, I analyzed the motivation of donors, and also studied attitudes towards the problem of justice and inequality in donors' views as well in the opinions of modern and older authors.

- Finally, I reviewed the most striking recent publications on the evolutionary nature of altruism and tried to assess how this new approach influenced the ethical norms of contemporary philanthropy.

Analysis of the above aspects allowed me to understand which traditional ethical norms of philanthropy are still relevant and what's new in the picture. Eventually this helped me to forecast future development of philanthropy and evaluate its future role in development of society.

For this study, I've used mixed research methods that include:

- a) literature review;
- b) analysis of statistical data;
- b) express interviews with donors and experts from the two countries (UK, Russia): 4

anonymous interviews with the three directors of charitable foundations and one founder of charitable foundation.

In addition, in this paper I largely relied on my own practical experience in leading large charity organizations, advising to wealthy individuals and companies interested in elaborating their philanthropic strategies in Russian and internationally, and managing the association of Russia's largest charitable foundations.

I would like to thank Professor Santi Aurell and Professor Montserrat Herrero for the discussions of the subject and great ideas which I've used in this work.

## 2. Generosity as a Virtue in Classical Philosophy

The ethics of virtue is both old and new. In fact, the history of the study of the ethics of virtues is almost as old as the history of philosophy itself. Many of the great minds of antiquity and of the more recent years, concerned this subject: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Kant, Hume, Nietzsche and others. Generosity is one of human virtues mentioned by Aristotle.

Schools of ethics in Western philosophy represent, very roughly, three basic approaches. The first, inspired by the work of Aristotle, states that the virtues (such as justice, charity and generosity) are dispositions to act in ways that benefit both the person possessing them and that person's society <sup>(iv)</sup>. The second approach, introduced particularly by Kant, describes the concept of duty central to morality: humans are bound, from a knowledge of their duty as rational beings, to obey the categorical imperative to respect other rational beings <sup>(v)</sup>. Thirdly, utilitarianism asserts that the guiding principle of conduct should be the greatest happiness or benefit of the greatest number of people <sup>(vi)</sup>.

Modern studies of these issues were revived in the middle of the 20th century thanks to Elisabeth Anscombe and her seminar paper "Modern Moral Philosophy", first published in 1958. This article provoked the appearance of many works on this topic, the most famous of which are collected in the Oxford University Press collection "Virtue Ethics" edited by Roger Chrisp and Michael Slote <sup>(vii)</sup>.

Many modern works are based on criticism of fundamental works, with arguments, in particular, that modern societies live according to different moral laws and it is fruitless to follow the philosophies of that time. However, it's important to note to that many of the 20<sup>th</sup> century research in virtue ethics emerged from, and were inspired by deficiencies of Utilitarianism and Kantian approaches thus having quite indulgent, if not negative, attitude <sup>(viii)</sup>.

For instance, some of Kant's convictions about moral hazard for accepting gifts (help) sound quite outdated, especially when it comes to approach to gifts and philanthropy in general. Accepting another's help, he stated, is to degrade oneself in relation to the giver. Receiving help gives rise to an obligation of gratitude that can never be fully satisfied. In this situation the giver still enjoys a superior standing for being the first to have given. Thus, the morally virtuous agent, who has a duty to himself to protect his own dignity, must avoid accepting gifts from others except when his neediness absolutely requires it. Furthermore, Kant recognized that people were too wedded to the honour-based logic of gift-giving, and so unfairly looked down upon impoverished recipients of charity. Given this fact, Kant insisted that benefactors must do what

they can to protect the dignity of recipients, by representing what they give as what recipients are owed, and by giving anonymously if possible (ix).

In modern Western culture it is not only the norm for wealthy people and also companies to donate money and resources, but also for those in need to accept them with gratitude (without a hint of loss of their dignity). Moreover, nominal donations are given and encouraged by public opinion, contribute to enhancing the donor's reputation, while the anonymity of donations can be perceived as an attempt to avoid responsibility for the result of a particular charitable project (or more simply - future fate of the grantee).

However, some of Kant's views do seem to be very much up to date. For example, Kant recognized that such an economic and societal system in which people must trade their dignity to gain access to means of subsistence, is unjust. Hence rich benefactors were not entitled to pride themselves in their charitable works or consider themselves superior to their grantees (x). Here, Kant's opinion corresponds to the modern views of the ethics of philanthropy in many societies with a developed system of private philanthropy: in these societies it is almost indecent for a donor to consider himself superior to its grantee.

Also from the point of view of modern ethics of philanthropy, Aristotle's reasoning about the two virtues directly related to philanthropy — generosity and magnificence — sounds quite relevant. Inequality is the basis for the manifestation of these virtues. The virtue of generosity is the lot of individual donors, and their help may be modest. Magnificence is the virtue of wealthy people who donate large amounts of money for public purposes. Aristotle specifically emphasizes that this kind of large donors (magnificent people) should have a delicate taste. "The magnificent man is like an artist," says Aristotle, "for he can see what is fitting and spend large sums tastefully." One can assume: to be magnificent requires a very public-spirited generosity, good sense and fine aesthetic taste, and lots and lots of money. (xi).

At the same time in the Aristotle's concept both generous and magnificent people a) help others using the money they inherited, and b) are guided in their actions more by their ideas about virtues and nobility than by the fate of those they help. This approach shows a significant difference with the norms and best practices of contemporary philanthropy, in which the donor normally shares responsibility for achieving the result that his donation is aimed at (xii). As I show later, such result-oriented approach makes contemporary philanthropy norms much closer to the medieval Protestantism charitable ethics.

As the above examples show, from the point of view of ethics of philanthropy, one can find many interesting parallels between classical philosophy and modern life. At the same time, there are significant differences between the past and modern ethical norms. Further study of this subject, including the field's ethical norms and where they come from, donors' motivation, society's attitude to donors and grantees is very much needed. This knowledge, based on an analysis of new trends and an assessment of the role of past philosophical concepts, will make it possible to understand the new ethics of philanthropy; clarify the ethical aspects of relation between donors and grantees; donors and society; donors and state, and ultimately lead to understanding of philanthropy's role in society.

The book edited by Stephen Gardiner "Virtue Ethics, Old and New" which contains materials of the Virtue Ethics international conference held in the University of the Cantenbury (New

Zealand) in 2002, sheds light on modern interpretations of virtue ethics philosophy representing various views and reexaminations of classical texts. In general, as Gardiner states, modern research of virtues ethics is still on a very early stage of its development. However, the published collection of views of modern authors allows past versions of virtue ethics to illuminate the nature and possibilities of the approach for contemporary audiences where this might mean both self-criticism and self-development <sup>(xiii)</sup>.

### 3. Cultural Roots of Philanthropy in the UK, China, Brazil and Russia

Most countries in the world are homes to people of various origin, ethnics, culture and religion. However, there are special features about each country which are important for better understanding of each country society’s cultural background and eventually for understanding of current philanthropic ethics.

Below I’m exploring some aspects of ethnic, religious and historical situation in four quite different countries of the world in order to estimate to what extent cultural and religious history of particular country can impact the philanthropy ethics and perhaps try to find out what are the other factors influencing it. I specifically chose to compare four countries with very different histories, different religions and cultures, different levels of ethnic diversity, located in different parts of the world. **United Kingdom** – the most influential country of old Europe with age-old traditions of charity and philanthropy, whose culture has influenced many societies in the New World. **China** – the Asian “red dragon”, the largest country in the world in terms of population and the second largest economy, a country with a very long history and a fast-growing philanthropic sector. **Russia** – the largest country in the world in terms of territory, located in both Europe and Asia, which survived two bloody wars in the 20th century and the 70-year ban on philanthropy during the period of Soviet union. **Brazil** – the largest economy in Latin America, a multinational state with a high level of inequality that has survived military dictatorship and is currently experiencing the rapid development of philanthropy.

Here below is a comparison of some statistical data on ethnicity, religious preferences as well as remarkable historical and cultural features which might affect philanthropy’s ethics and development.

Table 1. Ethnic Groups, 2010-2013

Country	Ethnic groups
China	Han Chinese 91.5%, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uyghur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean, and other nationalities 8.5%
Brazil	White 57.3%, mulatto (mixed white and black) 38.5%, black 6.2%, other (includes Japanese, Arab, Amerindian) 0.9%, unspecified 0.7%
Russia*	Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, Bashkir 1.2%, Chuvash 1.1%, other 12.1%
UK**	British White 80.5%, Asian 7.5%, Other White 4.4%, Black including Black African 3.3%, Indian 2.5%, Mixed/Multiple 2.2% and Other ethnic groups at 2.1%

Sources: [www.unicef.cn](http://www.unicef.cn), [www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com), retrieved 2018, 2019

\*Russia in Figures, 2017: Statistical Handbook, Rosstat 2017

\*\* [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), 2011 Census, data on population of England and Wales, data on Scotland and Ireland not available

Table 2. Religions by Country, 2010-2018

Religion	Christian	Islam	Irreligion	Hindu	Buddhist	Folk religion	Other religion	Jewish
	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)	Popu- lation (%)
Brazil	183,310,550 (89.46%)	40,000 (0.02%)	15,401,050 (7.52%)	0 (0.00%)	194,950 (0.10%)	5,458,600 (2.66%)	389,900 (0.19%)	110,000 (0.05%)
China	68,408,340 (5.10%)	24,144,120 (1.80%)	700,179,480 (52.20%)	20,000 (0.00%)	244,123,880 (18.20%)	293,753,460 (21.90%)	9,389,380 (0.80%)	0 (0.00%)
Russia	112,569,380 (77.00%)	7,309,700 (5.00%)	11,695,520 (8.00%)	29,239 (0.02%)	1,461,940 (1.00%)	292,388 (0.20%)	12,835,833 (7.78%)	285,920 (1.00%)
UK	38,675,000 (59.5%)	2,860,000 (4.4%)	16,705,000 (25.7%)	0,845,000 (1.3%)	n.a.	4,615,000 (7.1%)	1,300,000 (2%)	n.a.

Source: The World Factbook, [CIA](http://cia.gov), 2010, 2011, VCIOM, 2010, 2017-2018

In terms of ethnicity structure China seems to be the most homogenous with Han Chinese comprising over 90% of the total population while Brazil is the most diverse with slightly over 57% of white Brazilians, as shown in the Tab.1. At the same time China has an incredibly high proportion of irreligious population (over 50%) while Brazil, on the contrary, has only 7.5% of irreligious population with a record share of Christians of almost 90% of the total population (see Tab.2). Russia and UK are both countries with prevailing Christian population (77% and 59.5% respectively) but in the UK there is higher share of irreligious population of 25.7%.

The three countries out of four – China, Brazil and Russia represent the developing and fast growing economies with GDP per capita USD16,7 thousand, USD15,6 thousand and 27,8 thousand respectively while UK is a country with a developed economy and GDP per capita of US\$44,1 thousand <sup>(xiv)</sup>.

High economic inequality of population against the background of fast growing wealth can become important preconditions of philanthropy development. Gini Coefficient is a statistical

measure to gauge the rich-poor income or wealth divide. It measures inequality of a distribution — be it of income or wealth — within nations or states. In the World Bank data, the index ranges between 0 and 100: a country with a totally flat income distribution, in which every person received the same income, would have a Gini index of 0; a country with a completely unequal distribution, where one person got all of the income and everyone else earned nothing, would have an index of 100.

In our sample of the four countries, again, the three developing countries Brazil, China and Russia have Gini Index between 49 in Brazil and 41 in Russia which puts them some higher than the middle of the world's countries list of 38.8. The same indicator in UK is 32.4 <sup>(xv)</sup>.

In addition, in the two countries of four – Russia and China – traditions of charity and philanthropy, although they existed before for a long time, were interrupted officially and practically during the 70-years Sovjet period in Russia and over several decades of Chinese Communist party rule. The high level of paternalism and the low level of private social activity, characteristic of societies with authoritarian power, have become factors hindering the development of philanthropy in these countries.

Below I'm going into the few most remarkable features of history or culture of the selected countries, which could affect their philanthropy values and current development.

#### China: Confucianism

Confucianism is often mentioned as Chinese traditional religion which has had a deep and long-term impact on Chinese society. However, many authors argue that it's not a religion. Confucianism is often characterized as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion. In fact, Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society. It was what sociologist Robert Bellah called a "civil religion," <sup>(xvi)</sup>, the sense of religious identity and common moral understanding at the foundation of a society's central institutions. It is also what Chinese sociologist called a "diffused religion" <sup>(xvii)</sup>. Its institutions were not a separate church, but those of society, family, school, and state; its priests were not separate liturgical specialists, but parents, teachers, and officials. Confucianism was part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life; to Confucians, everyday life was the arena of religion <sup>(xviii)</sup>.

Kong Fuzi (Confucius in Latinized form) is honored in China as a great sage of antiquity whose writings promoted peace and harmony and good morals in family life and society in general. Ritualized reverence for one's ancestors, sometimes referred to as ancestor worship, has been a tradition in China since at least the Shang Dynasty (1750–1040 B.C.) <sup>(xix)</sup>. Later Confucian reformation movement called Neo-Confucianism produced reformers, philanthropists, dedicated teachers and officials, and social philosophers in Chinese society from the eleventh through the nineteenth centuries <sup>(xx)</sup>.

Until today the Western philanthropy tradition is not very influential in China. The most of donors are the wealthiest businessmen who either form foundations or fund charitable projects directly out of their business cash flow.

## Colonial Past and Catholics in Brazil

So far Brazil has the largest number of Catholics in the world. Roman Catholicism has been Brazil's main religion since the beginning of the 16th century. It was introduced among the Native Brazilians by Jesuits missionaries and also observed by all the Portuguese first settlers. Brazil possesses a richly spiritual society formed from the meeting of the Roman Catholic Church with the religious traditions of African slaves and indigenous people. This confluence of faiths during the Portuguese colonization of Brazil led to the development of a diverse array of syncretistic practices within the overarching umbrella of Brazilian Roman Catholicism, characterized by traditional Portuguese festivities (<sup>xxi</sup>).

Today the situation is changing. Rapid economic and social change in the 21st century has led to some growth in secularism (no religious affiliation). However, the current state of philanthropy in the country is deeply rooted in the Christian traditions of charity and mutual aid in the Christian communities.

## Russia: Sovjet Propaganda of Atheism

Soviet period has significantly influence not only demographic but also cultural landscape of modern Russia. Soviet Union has been formed in 1922 on territory of former Russian Empire, a part of Poland and few other countries. It was a multinational state with total population close to 300 mln people. At least two major events had great influence at the country's demographic situation: first, the 26.6 mln of Soviet citizens of different nationality have died in World War II; second, millions of people became victims of Stalinist repressions between 1930 and 1950 (<sup>xxii</sup>).

All Russians have some kind of ethnic mix. Historian James Billington said, "Russia in that sense is kind of like America—a very different history, very different development, but they're similar in the sense that it's a kind of a wide civilization rather just a country. It's a multicultural place; it's absorbed all kind of different cultural strains and ethnic groups; and yet they have a very strong sense of national identity as we do." (<sup>xxiii</sup>).

Although officially the Orthodox and other religions were not banned by the Soviet authorities, however, any religious propaganda was banned under penalty of imprisonment. At the same time atheism was actively promoted. This influenced the fact that the perennial traditions of mutual aid and charity were interrupted and seemed to be forgotten. After the collapse of the USSR in Russia, after a series of political and economic crises, the political system changed and the economy began to grow rapidly.

Amid growing inequality and growing wealth, philanthropy began to grow rapidly, first with the help and model of large international charitable foundations and organizations, and then acquiring more and more of its own identity. Currently, due to the tensing of the political situation in Russia, there are practically no foreign donor organizations left, however, despite this, the volume of charitable and philanthropic projects is growing.

## UK: Home to the Oldest Philanthropy Tradition

UK philanthropy in its modern sense goes back to Tudor times, and the distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism following the decision of Henry VIII to leave the Church of

Rome. Eventually this decision became the reason for the formation of a new approach to giving, which is different from the giving of alms, widely accepted in the Middle Ages <sup>(xxiv)</sup>.

So, if within the framework of the Catholic doctrine, the fact of donation took place within the framework of the dialogue of the donor and God and increased the chances of the believer's soul to go to heaven, then the teaching of Protestantism paid much more attention to the purpose and result of the donation. In particular, this meant a more conscious attitude of the giver to the donation process and eventually became the cause of the secularization of charity. The modern concept of philanthropy as a way to solve important social problems outside the church and religion systems is associated with this approach. In this case, the initial motivation of the donor may well be related to his faith <sup>(xxv)</sup>.

The key moment in the development of modern UK philanthropy was the introduction in 1601 of the Statute of Charitable Uses, which enumerated for the first time the purposes which could acceptably be deemed as 'charitable' in law. This strengthened the notion of philanthropy as something that was concerned with secular problem solving, and laid the foundations for the definition of charity that is still used in the UK to this day (and, indeed, in many other places where common law is followed) <sup>(xxvi)</sup>

Although the practice of philanthropy gradually adopted a new, secular form, the motivation for donations remained religious for the vast majority of donors. A steady promotion of charitable commitments by the priests has played a significant role in the development of the culture of charity in the UK for hundreds of years. It is very unlikely that the great progress of philanthropy of the Tudor and Victorian times would have taken place without this constant promotion. Moreover, some "dissenting" groups of Protestants (for example, Quakers) emphasized the importance of donations, which as a result began to play a particularly prominent role in the history of British charity <sup>(xxvii)</sup>.

According to the UK Charity Commission, the oldest national charity still operating is the King's School, Canterbury, initially founded in 597 and re-founded c.1541 <sup>(xxviii)</sup>.

#### 4. Donors Motivation and Attitude to Inequality in the Ancient and Modern World

In order to gain a deeper understanding of such a complex matter as donor motivation, in addition to literature review I have also conducted express interviews with four respondents, each of whom has at least 10 years of experience working with philanthropic projects in Russia and the UK, namely:

Respondent A: Former businessman, founder of a charitable foundation to support science and education. The foundation was established in Russia, but its programs operate in Russia, Europe and Israel.

Respondent B: Businessman, founder of several charitable foundations in the field of culture support and philanthropy development, Russia.

Respondent C: Trustee of the hospice support foundation, programs operate in Russia and United Kingdom.

Respondent D: Director of a foundation for research support in the area of palliative care, United Kingdom.

Due to the reason that within the framework of this study it was not possible to comply with the rules for the protection of personal data, the respondents information and opinions are given completely anonymously (the respondents have been informed of this).

Classical authors can be found to have a lot in common with respect to the main motivations of donors, that is: people with virtues of generosity and magnificence act, on the one hand, in terms of religious doctrine which has taught that inequality is a part of the natural order, and that generous behavior provides an opportunity for those with wealth to secure passage to heaven; on the other hand, they wished to act nobly, so that they would be better received by the society in which they lived (for instance<sup>xxix,xxx</sup>).

The motivation of modern donors has some common features with the above. However, it contains not only a more proactive attitude to society and social problems, but also quite pragmatic motives. The respondents of my survey listed the following motives that guided them and their friends or colleagues, who decided to create a foundation or to systematically participate in philanthropy in some form:

- Desire to change the world for better (the other version: to improve social environment);
- Understanding that participation in philanthropy might improve one's reputation in the society or, furthermore, a person's reputation for generosity might improve their business image;
- Intention to solve a particular social problems;
- Social tradition of giving back to society through philanthropy;
- Motivation of individual donors of smaller scale and volunteers (many of which are young people) is mainly focused on the desire to improve their social status, expand the circle of personal and professional contacts, live a more interesting life, and better express themselves.

Three of the four respondents have outlined that a) donors' philanthropic motivation, in their view, is not so much related to a particular country or nation, at least in Western culture; b) very often the above motivations combining both ethical, idealistic and quite pragmatic aspects, act simultaneously and are difficult to separate.

Since philanthropy is one of the mechanisms for the redistribution of welfare in a society where social and economic inequality prevails and aggravates, it is important to understand the attitude of donors and society as a whole towards inequality.

Philosophers' views on inequality changed significantly over time. Classical authors such as Aristotle believed that men are fundamentally unequal and there is nothing unjust in this. However, he thought that greater economic equality increases the stability of the state and thus is in the interest of all citizens. One of the ways of wealth redistribution, he thought, is through generous donations of the wealthy to those in need. Interestingly, Aristotle thought about private wealth redistribution as a tool to increase stability of state as a whole: this far-sighted approach looks ambiguous from a modern point of view, which involves the separation of private and public finances and tasks that they are used for.

Philosopher John Locke suggested a coherent view of wealth inequality and redistribution. According to Locke, there are two means of redistributing resources in a society where inequality exists: charity and commerce. Charity assumes that a person in need has the right to a part of the resources of those who have them in abundance, but the person in need depends on benevolence of the rich. Commerce and trade are a more universal mechanism for the redistribution of wealth, since they do not depend on anyone's benevolence. Political society, in Locke's opinion, never has to take on this distributive function. <sup>(xxxix)</sup>.

The fact that people can buy and sell land for money, and to a greater extent than they need it for farming, is a good reason for Locke to justify the natural nature of inequality. “.. men have agreed that the possession of the land be disproportionate and unequal. By tacit and voluntary consent have discovered the way a man can have more land than it is capable of using, receiving gold and silver in exchange of the surplus land; Gold and silver can be accumulated without cause harm to anyone, being metals that are not damaged or corrupted, although they remain in the hands of their owners” <sup>(xxxix)</sup>.

In today's world, views on inequality are more contradictory than in the past: on the one hand, unlike in previous times, it has become less common to talk about inequality as a natural and pre-defined status quo; on the other hand, the level of inequality is quite high and in many countries continues to grow despite the intentions and pledges of many governments and non-governmental organizations to reduce inequality and ensure equal opportunities for all citizens in all spheres.

## 5. Origin of Virtue from Natural Science Point of View

In recent decades, with the publication of new scientific and popular science literature on the evolutionary nature of a number of virtues and, in particular, altruism, the ethics of modern philanthropy may be revised. Those virtuous principles of behavior which were previously perceived by people as voluntarily and consciously chosen, are now seen as quite strictly evolutionary and genetically conditioned.

One of the striking publications of this kind is a book by famous zoologist, journalist and author Matt Ridley which is called “The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation”. This book, revolutionary in many aspects, analyses the nature of man, how much human beings are actually inclined towards selfishness or altruism and why. Darwin assumed that only the fittest survived in a constant evolutionary struggle, but then why do people prefer to live in complex communities? <sup>(xxxix)</sup>.

Using the latest discoveries of genetics, psychology and anthropology, as well as the all-but-forgotten work of the Russian scientist of the 19th century Peter Kropotkin, the author explores the nature of human virtues and shows that personal interest and mutual assistance are not at all incompatible. In fact, the tendency to cooperate and help one another is likely to evolve evolutionarily, and as part of a selfish survival strategy — by exchanging services, we can benefit ourselves and others.

The proposed approach allows modern researchers to revise their views on the ethical dilemmas and principles that determine donors' and grantees' behavior in light of recent data from natural

sciences. In particular, it needs to be further explored which part of donors' motivations is rooted in human virtues and ethics.

## 6. Conclusion

In the above essay an attempt has been made to explore the issue of ethics of philanthropy, a complex and under-explored phenomenon of economic and social life of modern society.

Analysis of various aspects of the development of philanthropy and factors that could affect it in terms of ethics (namely, the ethics of virtues; cultural and religious roots of philanthropy in the four reviewed countries; motivation of donors and attitudes towards the problem of justice and inequality; ethical dilemmas of modern philanthropy in light of recent data from natural sciences) allowed to understand which traditional ethical norms of philanthropy are relevant and what's new in the picture:

- One of the main conclusions of this work is that today's philanthropy remains an important mechanism for the redistribution of welfare in a society where social and economic inequality exists – just like it was in the past.
- A number of fundamental ethical virtues from classic philosophy retain their relevancy, the major of them being generosity. This virtue has been warmly appreciated by societies then and now.
- However, there are some remarkable shifts in donors' motivations and ethical principles: contemporary donors are less religious, have more proactive attitude to society and social problems solving (desire to change the world for better, intention to solve particular social problems, with giving back to society), and are motivated by more pragmatic reasons such as business image.
- According to the respondents' opinion, donors' philanthropic motivation is not so much related to particular countries or nations, at least in Western culture. Although both classical philosophers and modern researchers consider social and economic inequality to be one of the major motives of philanthropy attitude, the concept has changed. It has become less common to talk about inequality as a natural and pre-defined status quo; at the same time, the level of inequality is quite high and, in many countries, continues to grow despite the pronounced intentions of governments and non-governmental organizations to reduce inequality and ensure equal opportunities for all citizens in every field.
- Finally, evolutionary nature of some virtues and, in particular, altruism, has been recently scientifically discovered, which may lead to revision of the ethics of modern philanthropy. Those virtuous principles of behavior which were previously perceived as voluntarily and consciously chosen, are now seen as evolutionary and genetically predetermined.

As the essay shows, in the ethics of philanthropy, one can find many interesting crosses between classical philosophy and modern life. At the same time, there are significant differences between the past and modern ethical norms, so further study on this subject, including the ethical norms and their origins, donors' motivation, society's attitude to donors and grantees is essential to provide solid ground to the philanthropy of today and the future. This knowledge, based on an analysis of new trends and an assessment of the role of past philosophical concepts, will make it

possible to understand the new ethics of philanthropy, clarify the ethical aspects of relations between donors and grantees, donors and society, donors and state, and ultimately lead to understanding of philanthropy's role in society.

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- <sup>i</sup> Charitable Giving Report, Blackboud Institute for Philanthropic Impact, 2018
- <sup>ii</sup> CAF Gross Domestic Philanthropy report, 2016
- <sup>iii</sup> Corporate Responsibility, Social Action, Institutions and Governance. Ed. By Ronny Manos, Rishon LeZion, 2016
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