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Historically contested concepts: A conceptual history of philanthropy in France, 1712-1914

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Abstract
Since W. B. Gallie introduced the notion of essentially contested concepts (ECCs) in 1956, social science scholars have increasingly used his framework to analyze key concepts drawing "endless disputes" from contestant users. Despite its merits, the ECC framework has been limited by a neglect of social, cultural, and political contexts, the invisibility of actors, and its ahistorical character. To understand how ECCs evolve and change over time, I use a conceptual history approach to study the concept of philanthropy, recently labeled as an ECC. Using France during classical modernity as a case study, I analyze key events and actors from the concept's inception in 1712 as a virtue of the Enlightenment to its triumph after 1789 as a secular alternative to Catholic charity, until its decline at the end of the nineteenth century as a new consensus emerged around the concept of solidarity. By introducing the notion of historically contested concepts, I make several contributions to research on ECCs, conceptual contestation, and conceptual change.

Keywords Charity · Essentially contested concepts · French history · Secularism · Socialism · Solidarity

In the social sciences, the strong normative valence associated with key concepts such as democracy, art, or social justice leads scholars to "energetically defend their own usage, whereas others will contend that an alternative usage is correct" (Collier et al. 2006, p. 212). In a seminal article, W.B. Gallie (1956, p. 169) introduced the notion of *essentially contested concepts* (ECCs) to describe those concepts that "inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" and designed an analytic framework to assess their degree of contestation. Interest for ECCs has surged in recent years as scholars in political science, law, sociology, organization studies, and business ethics have relied on Gallie's framework to analyze ubiquitous concepts of their respective disciplines.

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The ECC framework has several merits attested by its increasing popularity. It provides researchers with "a set of interrelated criteria that serve to illuminate important problems in understanding and analyzing concepts" (Collier et al. 2006, p. 215). It is thus very useful to identify and to review the features of "normative concepts with a certain internal complexity" (Waldron 2002, p. 150) that draw disagreements about their essence. Thus, Gallie's framework is a compelling tool to conduct literature reviews and to raise the level of awareness of researchers in a given field. Recognizing that certain concepts are contested possibly advances the quality of argumentation of contestant parties, as the better meanings tend to supplant the others.

However, the ECC framework also suffers from limitations hindering its capacity to understand how contestation evolves over time and conceptual change can happen. I identify three main weaknesses: a neglect for social, cultural, and political contexts; the invisibility of the contesting parties who disagree on the proper uses of concepts; and a lack of historical depth in both the empirical materials and the methods used to analyze them. To address these flaws, I propose to consider ECCs as historical concepts (Farr 1982) as I turn to the following research question: How do essentially contested concepts evolve and change through history?

I mobilize the method of conceptual history (Hampsher-Monk et al. 1998; Koselleck 2002) to study philanthropy, a concept that has recently been labelled as an ECC (Daly 2011). Contrary to most academic studies of philanthropy, which are implicitly grounded in the American context and often ignore the plasticity of the concept throughout history, I focus on the specific context of France during classical modernity. Doing so, I answer recent calls to study philanthrop*ies* in a diversity of cultural and political contexts, embedded in the history of different nations (Wiepking and Handy 2015). Using France as my case study, I analyze key events and actors over two hundred years of history from the concept's inception in 1712 to its decline before the First World War erupted.

I present the emergence of philanthropy as a secular virtue during the Enlightenment, its rise after 1789 as a liberal, secular alternative to the Catholic concept of charity, the Catholic reaction under Restoration, the emerging socialist critique, and the decline of philanthropy in the late nineteenth century as a new consensus emerged around the concept of solidarity to promote the first welfare state measures in France. Narrating this history in four successive phases, I show that philanthropy has not always been contested. Its contestation happened in relation to rival concepts (*charité, solidarité*) and involved multiple social groups with diverging interests (liberal philosophers, freemasons, Catholic elites, socialist thinkers, republican statesmen).

By introducing the notion of *historically contested concepts*, I make several contributions to research on ECCs, conceptual contestation, and conceptual change. First, contrary to what the literature suggests (Collier et al. 2006), I argue that an ECC is not necessarily contested at inception. Second, contestation is not restricted to the boundaries of a single concept, but often carries over to two or more rival concepts. Third, I underline how conflicting social groups drive the contestation and use concepts as linguistic vehicles to achieve political goals. A concept can be contested by different groups and for different reasons, at the same time or successively. Fourth, I show the catalytic consequences of translating a concept into a set of practices, either clarifying its distinctive nature or showing unexpected similarities in practice with rival concepts. Finally, I reveal the dialectical dimension of conceptual change, as previously rival

concepts can be grouped by proponents of a synthesis around a new concept that addresses their weaknesses.

Theoretical background: Concepts, contestation, and change

Different theoretical models have been developed over the years to define what a concept is and how concepts operate, both cognitively and sociologically (Goertz 2006; Margolis and Laurence 1999). In the *classical model*, concepts are "mental representations of the categories of the world." (Adcock 2005, p. 3) This realist view defines concepts as "theories about the fundamental constitutive elements of a phenomenon" (Goertz 2006, p. 5). Relying on conceptual categories with clear boundaries, causal mechanisms, and necessary and sufficient features (Goertz 2006; Taylor 2003), as well as a focus on individual cognition, the classic model dominates dictionary definitions and still exerts influence in academia. However, research in psychology and cognitive sciences has challenged the classical model and stressed the complexity and flexibility of cognitive structures (Komatsu 1992; Margolis and Laurence 1999). For instance, prototype theory has showed that categories have fuzzy boundaries and are constituted of elements with unequal status, some concepts being more central than others (Rosch and Lloyd 1978).

Alternatively, scholars have used a *language-focused model* to study concepts as "linguistic and cultural artifacts" (Freeden 1994, p. 146), which exist independently of particular individuals and cannot be "articulated without the vocabularies of terms in language" (Farr 2004, p. 9). In this linguistic framework concepts become "complex structures of language-based meaning that are both shared and contested by groups of individuals" (Adcock 2005, p. 15). Contrary to the classical model, the multiplicity of meanings is not considered deficient (Sartori 1984) or arbitrary as "everything becomes a matter of who is in charge of the definition" (Goertz 2006, p. 4), but is rather welcomed as a chief research interest (Freeden 1994). Scholars adopting the language-focused framework tend to attribute concepts to groups instead of individual cognitive structures and to study the collective dynamics of concept uses, including conceptual contestation among groups (Adcock 2005, p. 26).

In 1956, the Scottish philosopher W. B. Gallie (1956, p. 169) introduced the notion of *essentially contested concepts* (ECCs), which "inevitably involve endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users." Gallie proposes an analytic framework with seven criteria to assess the degree of contestation of concepts (Collier et al. 2006; Gallie 1956): appraisiveness (strong normative valence), internal complexity (multiple components or features), diverse describability (different users may describe meaning in different ways), openness (subject to periodic revision according to context), reciprocal recognition (contending parties recognize their disagreement), exemplars (one or several archetypal instances), and progressive competition (the better arguments of contestant users may eventually lead to agreement).

Over the past decades, interest in the ECC framework has grown rapidly in disciplines ranging from political theory to business ethics, in order to analyze pervasive concepts "forever open to dispute and disagreement" (Ball 2002, p. 21): democracy and social justice (Collier et al. 2006), the rule of law (Waldron 2002), stakeholders (Miles 2012), corporate social responsibility (Okoye 2009), corporate citizenship (Moon et al. 2005), and social entrepreneurship (Choi and Majumdar 2014).

Context, actors, history: The limitations of the ECC framework

In theory, the ECC framework is well-suited to take *conceptual change* into account. Collier et al. (2006, p. 236) argue that the ECC framework is valuable "to give a realistic account of complex concepts and the dynamics of concept change" and that "a central aspect of openness is change over time in the political, economic, and social systems being compared" (Collier et al. 2006, p. 224). Gallie himself distinguished between contested and contest*able* concepts, and some later claimed that "temporary practical closure" (Care 1973, p. 14) or "decontestation" (Freeden 1994, p. 157) could be achieved at certain times. Despite this theoretical potential, I identify three recurrent deficiencies in articles relying on the ECC framework that hinder its power to study conceptual contestation and change over time.

First, scholars rarely ground their analysis in a specific context, leaving aside important social, cultural, and political dimensions that may be drivers or boundary conditions to conceptual contestation. For instance, Miles (2012) presents stakeholder as an abstract concept discussed by a global community of scholars, and he only briefly mentions a list of countries that adopted public policies related to stakeholders. Moon et al. (2005) do not define the geographical boundaries of the corporate citizenship debate and merely cite American, Canadian, and British corporations. The literature on social entrepreneurship presented by Choi and Majumdar (2014) is similarly reviewed with a purely theoretical and decontextualized perspective. Implicitly, these studies are embedded in a contemporary, Anglo-American context that is not taken into account in the analysis. A notable exception is Waldron's (2002) detailed study of the rule of law in the state of Florida.

Second, articles using the ECC framework tend to ignore the particular actors involved in the contestation. Little is known about the identities, the intentions, and the specific roles of individuals and groups involved in the conceptual contestation. Predominantly, the authors of these articles use passive forms and impersonal nouns such as "contestant users" (Okoye 2009, p. 617) or "contesting parties" (Choi and Majumdar 2014, p. 366). For example, Miles (2012) only briefly mentions the few well-known scholars involved in the stakeholder debate such as Ed Freeman and Milton Friedman. She cites their works several times but does not analyze "their varying situations and intentions in using [stakeholder]" (Skinner 1969, p. 38). Except for a single paragraph (Miles 2012, p. 292), little is known about the reasons why Freeman coined and promoted the stakeholder concept back in the early 1980s and its relationships with the rival concept of shareholder.

Third, and most important, these studies disturbingly lack temporality and a sense of history, "for to claim that a particular concept is essentially contested, is to take an ahistorical view of the character and function" (Ball 1998, p. 80) of concepts. Describing a concept as essentially contested often suggests permanent contestation, which does not capture its evolution over time. Its structure is treated as static and synchronic. With the exception of Waldron's (2002, pp. 140–144) "history of contestation" of the rule of law from Aristotle to Burke, most ECC articles only mention history in passing, when discussing the open character of ECCs (Gallie 1956). Although Okoye (2009, p. 620) writes that "considerable features of CSR have changed over time," she does not detail historical changes beyond mentioning a few dates of key CSR publications. Choi and Majumdar (2014, p. 369) argue that since social entrepreneurship is a young concept, a historical perspective is therefore limited.

To help overcome the limitations caused by neglect of context, invisibility of actors, and a-historical perspectives, I argue that we need to view ECCs as *historical concepts*. According to Farr (1982, p. 689), "a historical concept is either one whose scope is temporally restricted to a specific historical period or one whose meaning is mutable and changes along with the changing practices and beliefs of political agents." The research question I propose to address is thus: How do essentially contested concepts evolve and change through history? I now turn to the research method of *conceptual history* that I use to conduct the present study.

Methods and data

Method: Conceptual history

Conceptual history can be defined as a "historical sociology of concept formation" (Somers 1995a, p. 115), which understands concepts as "words in their sites" (Somers 1995b, p. 113). It is a particular form of history that focuses on "the contested and historical character of the use of concepts" (Palonen 2002, p. 103). Conceptual history relies on a constructivist epistemology whereby concepts are contextual, situated, and socially constructed. "Immersed in the linguistic turn" (Hampsher-Monk et al. 1998, p. 229), conceptual history offers a set of methodological tools to understand the political, social, and cultural background upon which concepts are formed and evolve over time through human agency (Koselleck 2002).

Two distinct traditions exist (Hampsher-Monk et al. 1998): the German *Begriffsgeschichte* ("Heidelberg School") pioneered by Reinhart Koselleck, and the Anglo-American critical conceptual history ("Cambridge School") developed by Quentin Skinner. Both Skinner (1969) and Koselleck (2002) criticized the ahistorical nature of most works in the history of ideas, for which concepts remained constant over time, across contexts, and regardless of their uses by different actors. In contrast, for conceptual historians, "to study the history of political concepts is to revisit old battlefields and reconstruct the positions and strategies of the opposing forces" (Ball 1998, p. 82). Individuals and groups are not passive vehicles repeatedly reenacting invariable concepts across history but purposeful agents of change (Merton and Barber 2004; Richter 1995).

This method of historical analysis does not entail linear, seamless evolution, but is particularly interested in contingencies and contestations, namely "the accidents, the minute deviations […], the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us" (Foucault 1984, p. 81). Conceptual historians are able to reveal "lost distinctions, forgotten connections, and unfamiliar but coherent uses" of studied concepts (Farr 2004, p. 25). In other words, conceptual history enables us to trace "the conflicting and changing interpretations of the concepts" (Palonen 2002, p. 97) used by different historical agents. Scholars in different disciplines outside history have used this method to critically examine concepts like civil society (Somers 1995a), poverty (Dean 1992), social capital (Farr 2004), limited liability and moral hazard (Djelic and Bothello 2013), and environmentalism (Bothello and Djelic 2018). Although not explicitly using the tradition of conceptual history, Merton and Barber's (2004) fascinating and posthumous research on "serendipity" relies on a similar methodological approach.

Conceptual historians use various methodological tools: diachronic (history of a particular word in time) and synchronic (key structural features of a word at one point in time) analyses of language, semasiology (the study of all meanings of a term, word, or concept), onomasiology (the study of all names or terms for the same concept), and semantic field theory (Richter 1995, p. 11). Tracing a concept involves studying its usage in written texts and analyzing words, phrases, metaphors, and arguments used by their authors (Hampsher-Monk et al. 1998, p. 234). The empirical material is similar to that used by historians. *Primary* documents are "all those texts produced in the period of a given conceptualization that have contributed in one way or another to shape and stabilize it" (Djelic and Bothello 2013, p. 591)—encyclopedias, dictionaries, legal documents, pamphlets, textbooks, newspapers, literary works, etc.—while *secondary* documents "are the work of commentators—historians or other analysts who later on came to discuss and account for a given conceptualization and its context."

Conceptual histories often take the form of a case study of a single concept. A well-selected case can help generate and further develop theory, allowing researchers to understand a larger class of similar phenomena (Gerring 2004). Cases with concrete details can be used as inspiration for new ideas or as illustration of theoretical contributions (Siggelkow 2007). Selecting atypical or extreme cases with rich information, many actors, dramatic events, and transparently observable processes, is often more useful than selecting average or random cases (Flyvbjerg 2006).

Empirical setting

Philanthropy as an ECC

Philanthropy, broadly defined as "giving of gifts of time or valuables (money, securities, property) for public purposes" (Salamon and Anheier 1992, p. 130) or "voluntary action for the public good" (Payton 1988), has become a ubiquitous phenomenon throughout the world. Despite this apparent triumph, there are recurring debates about what philanthropy really is or ought to be. Critics have depicted philanthropy as a mechanism perpetuating the hegemony of the dominant capitalist classes (Fisher 1983) or allowing them to avoid taxation while influencing public policy (Reich 2018). Among sympathizers, disagreements abound as to whether and to what extent philanthropy should be more strategic and adopt techniques from venture capital or the business sphere (Frumkin 2006). It is only recently that "philanthropic studies" have sought to unpack the different meanings of the term (Sulek 2010a). Building upon these works, Daly (2011, p. 537) applies Gallie's ECC framework while reviewing the literature on philanthropy to explain the ambiguity surrounding this "slippery idea which none of us can seize firmly." She concludes that philanthropy is indeed an ECC and invites scholars to pay more attention to their own usages of the concept.

Daly's study suffers from the same deficiencies of most articles using the ECC framework. First, she only studies the English word and mainly cites authors based in the United States, acknowledging that "studies on philanthropy have predominantly been studies of American philanthropy" (Daly 2011, p. 550). Yet she does not discuss how the American context shapes the type of contestation found in the literature. Second, her article focuses on the current scholarly debate around the concept of philanthropy, yet present-day academics are not the only relevant actors here: public

officials, journalists, nonprofit executives, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists themselves have also been part of intense discussions on the role of philanthropy in democratic societies (Reich et al. 2016). Third, while Daly (2011, p. 548) notes that "the concept of philanthropy has been modified in accordance with the evolution of societies, economies and politics," she does not analyze this evolution in detail.

Philanthropy in France, 1712–1914

Most academic studies on philanthropy have been published in the United States and relied on American data—including historical studies (Friedman and McGarvie 2003; Zunz 2011). Due to the visibility and influence of ultra-wealthy American philanthropists of both the Gilded Age and our current era (Harvey et al. 2011; Reich 2018), many observers believe that philanthropy is first and foremost an American phenomenon. Philanthropy indeed played a profound role in shaping American history among other private, voluntary initiatives for the public good like mutual benefit societies or fraternal associations. But philanthropy exists in many world traditions, and it is likely that historical paths in various countries differ from the well-documented American case (Ilchman et al. 1998).

As a case study, I conduct a conceptual history of philanthropy in France from its inception in the French language in 1712 until 1914, which saw the outbreak of World War I and the end of the period known as the "long nineteenth century" (Hobsbawm 1987, p. 8). To study the contestation of philanthropy, France during classical modernity offers an atypical and intriguing case. France has long been considered a hostile territory for the type of private, voluntary initiatives for the public good that has thrived in the United States. Charitable foundations and congregations were abolished after 1789 and the state was deemed sole custodian of the public interest. France has a tradition of power centralization and strong, established welfare-state policies in the twentieth century. France's "corporatist model" is thought to preclude a larger role for philanthropy (Salamon and Anheier 1998, pp. 240–243). Consequently, private giving remained low and private foundations few (Archambault 2001; Cohen 2003). Until recently, philanthropy was considered a worn-out and obsolete concept by many commentators in France (Duprat 1996). Thus, the French context is an excellent foil to the dominant American conceptualization of philanthropy.

Nonetheless for the past decade or so, there has been a surge of interest in philanthropy in France and a surprisingly positive reception from the media and the general public—except for a few voices concerned with tax incentives for wealthy donors (Gautier et al. 2015; Lambelet 2014). Private foundations and charitable giving were cautiously encouraged in the 1970s and 1980s as the welfare state transfers were increasingly perceived as unsustainable (Rosanvallon 1981). Such recent change can be partly explained through translation mechanisms and the transnational influence of a dominant American philanthropy (Djelic 1998). But as historians have exposed, there is a rich, overlooked history of philanthropy in France which peaked during the nineteenth century, before the welfare state emerged (Duprat 1993; Nord 1994).

Data collection and analysis

A key question is the choice of word(s) to include in the analysis. Conceptual historians tend to focus on the primary word designating the studied concept, and to extend the

analysis to "opposite, related, and parallel expressions" that help understand the full significance of that concept (Bödeker 1998, p. 55). Indeed, there is rarely a single word to encapsulate a concept, but rather "constellations which make up entire schemes or belief systems." (Ball et al. 1989, p. 33) I chose to focus on philanthropy, but I kept track of related words pertaining to poverty relief and social progress such as charity (*charité*), solidarity (*solidarité*), beneficence (*bienfaisance*), and public assistance (*assistance*).

Here I should stress that this research focuses on concepts and not on *practices*, i.e., actual performance of philanthropic acts. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the complex relationships between concepts and their instances across possible worlds, as this would imply metaphysical debates about realism, nominalism, and conceptualism (Earl 2007). Given this article's theoretical focus on ECCs and my methodological choice of conceptual history, it would also be inexpedient to collect and analyze data chiefly on philanthropic practices in France during the studied period. A difficulty is that concepts and their practical instances are often intertwined in written texts. I was as careful as possible to exclude texts merely describing practices and not engaging in any conceptual argument about philanthropy.

Data collection occurred between January and August 2017. For primary documents, I first explored the main French encyclopedias and dictionaries to trace the definitions of philanthropy (*philanthropie*) over time since its first documented use in 1712. This preliminary mapping uncovered the successive uses of the word, the major works on the topic, as well as concrete examples (Richter 1995). I also searched public French databases[1] for essays, literary texts, pamphlets, parliamentary archives explicitly discussing *philanthropie*. For secondary documents, I collected and explored the works of historians and other social scientists containing relevant discussions of the concept of philanthropy in France. Texts were identified from several sources, including the initial primary documents search, online search engines, reference lists from texts already collected, as well as personal advice from professional librarians from the *Musée Social* and the *Bibliothèque de l'Hôtel de Ville*. In total, I collected and analyzed 47 primary sources (18 dictionaries and encyclopedias, 20 essays, and 9 literary texts) and 42 secondary sources (which included 34 works of historians). Seventy-five percent of my sources were published in French and not translated into English. Table 1 presents a complete overview of these sources, which are detailed in the references list.

As with most conceptual histories, my aim is not to provide an exhaustive analysis. Instead, I focus on the main scenes of contestation and key historical moments when meanings appear to change (Foucault 1984; Skinner 2002). I start in 1712, continue throughout classical modernity, and conclude with the "long nineteenth century," a term coined by historian Eric Hobsbawm (1987, p. 8) to designate the period between the 1789 French Revolution and the start of the First World War in 1914. While philanthropy did not disappear in France afterwards, 1914 ended the prevailing power balance in Europe and had profound consequences of France's population and institutions, marking a clear change of era.

As the data analysis unfolded in iteration with theory, I identified four phases, which I subsequently detail: the emergence of philanthropy as a virtue during the

[1] In particular, I used Gallica, the open access, digital library of Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) containing more than 4 million documents, as well as Sudoc, France's academic documentation system, which comprises more than 12 million items.

Table 1 Primary and secondary sources used

	Source types	List of sources
Primary sources (47)	Dictionaries (13)	• Académie Française (1762, 1798, 1835) • Bescherelle (1856) • Féraud (1787) • Furetière (1727) • Grand Larousse (1878) • Hatzfeld/Darmesteter (1888) • Lachâtre (1870) • Littré (1874) • Nouveau Larousse Universel (1898) • Petit Larousse (1906) • Quillet (1934) • Trésor de la Langue Française (1988) • Trévoux (1771)
	Encyclopedias (5)	• Courtin/Didot – Enyclopédie Moderne (1850) • Diderot and D'Alembert – L'Encyclopédie (1750) • Dreyfus/Berthelot – Grande Encylopédie (1899) • Monzie/Febvre – Encyclopédie française (1939) • Encyclopédie d'Yverdon (1780)
	Essays (20)	• Bastiat – La loi (1850) • Bourgeois – Solidarité (1896) • Engels – Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England (1845) • Fourier – De l'anarchie industrielle et scientifique (1847) • Gérando – Le visiteur du pauvre (1821) • Laurent – Les habitués des prisons de Paris […] (1890) • Leroux – De l'humanité, de son principe et de son avenir (1840) • Malthus – An essay on the principle of population (1798) • Marx & Engels – Die heilige Familie (1844) • Mathiez – La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire […] (1903) • Mavidal & Laurent – Archives parlementaires (1867) • Naville – De la charité légale (1836) • Pinloche – La réforme de l'éducation en Allemagne […] (1889) • Proudhon – Solution du problème social (1848) • Proudhon – Du principe fédératif […] (1863) • Spencer – Social statics (1851) • Tocqueville – Mémoire sur le paupérisme (1835) • Toussaint – Les moeurs (1748) • Villermé – Tableau de l'état physique et moral des ouvriers […] (1840) • Voltaire – Le dictionnaire philosophique (1764)
	Fiction (9)	• Balzac – Le curé de village (1841) • Balzac – Les employés, ou la femme supérieure (1855) • Chateaubriand – Mémoires d'outre-tombe (1849) • Fénelon – Dialogue des morts (1712) • Flaubert – Ivre et mort (1838) • Flaubert – Les funérailles du docteur Mathurin (1839) • Flaubert – L'Education sentimentale (1869) • Hugo – Les misérables (1862) • Sue – Les mystères de Paris (1844)
Secondary sources (42)	History (34)	Bec (1994), Chantin (2003), Clarke (1964), Cohen (2003), Coing (1981), Dachez (2015), Dedeyan (1983), Delalande (2011), Duprat (1993, 1996), Elwitt (1986), Ewald (1986), Furet (1981, 1995), Hayward (1959), Henderson (1952), Hogu (1920), Jones (1982), Kettering (1988), Leglaive-Perani (2011), Marais (1999), Mitchell (1991), Mitsushima (2017), Nord (1994), Pinkney (1972), Rosanvallon (1981, 1990), Schneider (1990), Smith (1997), Stjernø (2009), Tombs (1996), Topalov (1996), Veyne (1990), Weiss (1983).
	Other social sciences (8)	Beaurepaire (2008), Blais (2008), Castel (1995), Debiesse (2007), Gothot-Mersch (1997), Hatzfeld (1971), Lambelet (2014), Silver (1994).

Enlightenment (from 1712 to the 1789 Revolution); the expansion of philanthropy as a secular, progressive, and organized alternative to Catholic charity (from 1789 to the Restoration in 1814); the Catholic reaction and the emerging socialist critique of philanthropy (from 1814 to the 1848 Revolution); the withdrawal of philanthropy and the rise of solidarity as a key concept of the emerging public policies of social insurance (from 1848 to 1914).

Scholars using a narrative mode of history usually embed their theoretical ideas in the story being told (Maclean et al. 2016). This raises important methodological questions about the trustworthiness of these narratives from a social scientific standpoint. Relying on the guidelines proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Gill et al. (2018) recently encouraged researchers to write more transparent historical narratives. While I deeply engaged with the sources presented in Table 1, source criticism (Lustick 1996) allowed me to realize that publishers of encyclopedias and dictionaries as well as historians were subject to biases and rather positive perspectives on philanthropy. To ensure dependability, I used a diversity of primary and secondary sources and the method of conceptual history allowed me to trace precisely the process through which philanthropy was coined, used, and contested. Transferability requires "thick description" of the case under study in order to transfer it to similar contexts (Guba 1981). I leveraged my knowledge of French to access a range of sources, many of which were never translated, in order to provide a rich and detailed account of my case study, within the length limits of a journal article.

In the remainder of this article, I present each phase in detail, illustrating how meanings and usages of philanthropy evolved in relation to significant events, debates, and writings. For each phase, I present key elements of the context, identify the main actors involved, and analyze how and for what purpose they used the concept of philanthropy. In a final section, I discuss what this conceptual history of philanthropy in France tells us more generally about conceptual contestation and conceptual change, developing the alternative notion of *historically contested concepts*.

Philanthropy: A secular virtue of the Enlightenment (1712–1789)

It is now well documented that the word philanthropy (*philanthrôpía*) appeared in ancient Greece during the fifth century BCE as a compound word composed of *phileô* (love, affectionate regard, or friendship) and *anthrôpos* (mankind, humanity) usually translated as the love of mankind (Aeschylus 1983; Sulek 2010b). It was sparingly used by Greek philosophers Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, and it is not until the late Renaissance that the word appeared in modern languages. In English, Sir Francis Bacon first used the word in a 1612 essay entitled "On Goodness and Goodness of Nature". Its meaning, "affecting the weal of men" (*weal* stands for general welfare or happiness), was reminiscent of Aristotelian virtues (Sulek 2010a). Philanthropy is distinct from the concept of "evergetism" (*euergetéō*: to do good) used in ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire to refer to wealthy patrons—including the emperor—ostentatiously funding public goods (Veyne 1990).

A hundred years later, the French word *philanthropie* appeared in Fénelon's 1712 essay "Dialogues of the Dead." In this essay, Fénelon, a theologian and writer, re-created a conversation in Athens between Socrates, Alcibiades, and Timon. The

dialogues featured Timon, a noted misanthropist, debating Alcibiades, a famous and admired statesman and general. Socrates intervened to outline a middle ground: even if men are flawed, one ought to love them and do them good, but without expecting anything from them in return. Philanthropy, then, is "a gentle, patient and selfless virtue, which endures evil without approving it" (Fénelon 1830, pp. 173–174). Through Socrates's voice, Fénelon distinguished between true philanthropy, which is quiet, tolerant, selfless, and looks to cure the ills of other men, and Alcibiades' fake philanthropy, driven by self-love and public approval. The former is considered divine and the latter vainglorious, corrupt, and dangerous.

The works of encylopedists and philosophers

Fénelon's conceptualization would prove to be highly influential throughout the eighteenth century. Prominent volumes like Diderot and D'Alembert's encylopedia (1751–1772) and the Trévoux dictionary (1704–1771) added the word *philanthropie* and copied entire sentences from Socrates' tirade in the "Dialogues of the Dead," adding only minor changes. Importantly, the core idea that philanthropy was a virtue, relying on man's natural goodness, became conventional. The word philanthropist (*philanthrope*) appeared around 1750 and was defined as "he who by disposition and natural goodness is inclined to love all men" in the 1762 French Academy Dictionary and as "the friend of mankind" in the 1771 Trévoux edition.

Enlightenment philosophers and writers espoused similar views regarding the nature of man. In his essay "*Les Moeurs*", Toussaint (1748) wrote that humans have a general interest in the well-being of their fellowmen for the sole reason that they are men like them. Voltaire (1764) famously argued in his "Philosophical Dictionary" that true virtue is beneficence towards other men and society, regardless of one's faith or personal morals. Enlightenment intellectuals believed that the first and highest virtue was this universal affection for humanity, of doing good to others. They used an array of different concepts to express similar ideas such as philanthropy, beneficence, humanity, sociability, and liberality. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the first two concepts, *philanthropie* and *bienfaisance* (literally, the act of doing good) surpassed the others (Duprat 1993).

Charity and philanthropy

These new and secular ideas were in sharp contrast with the well-established Catholic concept of charity (*charité*), already in use since the tenth century to describe one of the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). Charity (from the latin *caritas,* meaning altruistic love), referred to the "love of God" and the love of man as a creature of God (see Table 2). It is both an ideal and a call to action: helping ones' neighbor and distributing alms to the poor, as God did for his creatures. Poverty is central to Christian theology. Not only is it viewed as an inevitable consequence of man's sins, but it also constitutes an attribute of the Christ (Jones 1982). As such, a core idea developed in the Middle Ages that "almsgiving atones for sin" (Sirach 3:30). To reach salvation, the rich must practice charity towards the poor (Cohen 2003, p. 387).

Since at least the tenth century, charity was practiced in France and in Europe by Catholic congregations. The first hospitals, hospices, and orphanages were built by

Table 2 Main characteristics of key concepts studied

	Charity *Charité*	Philanthropy *Philanthropie*	Solidarity *Solidarité*
Current definitions	1. Love of one's neighbor. The highest virtue of Christian theology.	1. Love of mankind. Feeling of friendship towards other men.	1. Joint responsibility of debtors/creditors. 2. Interdependence between people or things.
	2. Charitable act (giving money, food, help), favor, alms.	2. Private giving, especially by wealthy individuals, foundations.	3. Mutual support between members of a group, driven by moral duty.
Origins	Christian Theology	Greek Mythology	French jurisprudence
	Latin translation of Greek word *agapè* (altruistic love).	Compound word of *phileô* (love, friendship) and *anthrôpos* (mankind).	Civil Code Latin *in solido* means "for the whole" in legal terms.
First appearance in French	Tenth century	1712	1693 (Jurisprudence) 1804 (Civil code)
Apex in	Old Regime	Enlightenment Age	2nd half of the nineteenth century
	1820s Restoration	1st half of the nineteenth century	Bourgeois' 1896 essay
Decline in	1789 Revolution	2nd half of the nineteenth century	n/a
	2nd half of the nineteenth century		
How it differs from	n/a	Charity:	Charity & Philanthropy:
		- Secular humanism rather than theological virtue	- Mutual social obligations rather than altruism or religion
		- Scientific methods over religious beliefs	- Mandatory/enforced over voluntary provision
		- Autonomy over permanent dependence	- Funded through taxation over private giving
		-Publicity over privacy	- National, large-scale over piecemeal solutions
Main proponents	- Catholic Church	- Secular philosophers	- Radical and Radical-socialist political leaders

Table 2 (continued)

	Charity *Charité*	Philanthropy *Philanthropie*	Solidarity *Solidarité*
Main opponents	- Congregations - Theologians - Catholic conservatives - Secular philosophers - Socialist/Marxist thinkers and political leaders - Radical and Radical-socialist political leaders	- Freemasons - Liberal elites (industrial, scientific, political…) - Catholic progressives - Catholic conservatives - Socialist/Marxist thinkers and political leaders - Radical and Radical-socialist political leaders	- Freemasons - Catholic progressives - Sociologists - Catholic conservatives - Socialist/Marxist thinkers and political leaders - Liberal economists
Associated concepts	Faith, hope, almsgiving. "Legal charity".	Beneficence, humanity, sociability, liberality. "False philanthropy".	Public assistance, social reform, welfare state, nationalism.

clergymen and financed through donations and bequests of rich noblemen and merchants (Cohen 2003; Coing 1981). As they developed over the centuries, these "foundations" were met with suspicion by feudal lords and royal power. Removed from the national economy and exempt from property sale taxes, Catholic foundations were referred to as "dead hand" (*mainmorte*) and were increasingly controlled during the Renaissance (Clarke 1964; Marais 1999). Strict measures included prior authorization by the king before any new creation, registration of the assets received by the Church or congregations, and payments of heavy fees. However, these foundations preceded and were not related to the term philanthropy; they were associated with Catholic charity instead.

When *philanthropie* and *bienfaisance* appeared in the vocabulary, many Catholic writers and clergymen in France used these new words in a positive way. They were not seen with contempt or derision, as will be the case a century later, but as synonyms of charity. The man who coined philanthropy, Fénelon, was a Catholic theologian. The Jesuits from the Trévoux dictionary wrote in 1725 that beneficence was the spirit of true religion, and the main purpose of the Gospel. Increasingly, though, Enlightenment philosophers promoted another meaning for philanthropy: a secular, progressive alternative to charity (Cohen 2003, p. 397).

A growing conceptual distinction between religious charity and secular philanthropy was noticeable in the second half of the century. Diderot, Morelly, Rousseau, Helvetius, and Voltaire believed that man was good and society perfectible. In their view, love of mankind neither required the intercession of God nor needed to be channeled through Catholic institutions (Duprat 1993). Their essays were scandalous to the Church, and many were banned in France but distributed covertly. Voltaire (1764), in particular, was highly critical of the theological virtue of charity[2] which he opposed to concrete beneficence to society, and the hypocrisy of Catholics who only gave to go to heaven. He wrote that vainglorious philanthropists were more virtuous than saints living in seclusion and argued for improving society without expecting personal salvation in return.

Freemasonry as a philanthropic project

When freemasonry appeared in France around 1720, its members were mostly English, Irish, and Scottish elites in exile. The first lodge was created in Paris in 1725 and French citizens were increasingly accepted (Dachez 2015). In 1736, the Scottish philosopher Andrew Michael Ramsay—an admirer of Fénelon who depicted him as a champion of civil and religious tolerance (Hogu 1920)—pronounced a famous discourse that many consider to be the founding text of French freemasonry. In this text, he defined four qualities to become a freemason: philanthropy (love of mankind), sound morals, secrecy, and a taste for sciences and fine arts (Henderson 1952). By philanthropy, Ramsay meant not only mutual assistance between brothers but also a concern for the well-being of the whole human race. At the time, there were only a few hundred freemasons in France and all were Catholics or Protestants. Atheism and licentiousness

[2] His note on virtue (*Vertu*) contains this statement: "As to charity, is it not that which the Greeks and Romans understood by humanity—love of your neighbor? This love is nothing, if it does not act; beneficence is therefore the only true virtue."

were condemned, and all masons had to believe in God and life after death (Beaurepaire 2008).

However, in 1738, a papal bull condemned freemasonry and threatened Catholics joining masonic lodges with excommunication. Freemasonry's religious tolerance, secret rituals, and growing influence on the French elite were considered threats by the Catholic Church, which still prohibits Catholics from becoming freemasons today (Dachez 2015). The edict was never enforced by the government, but the seeds of later conflicts between the anticlerical wing of French freemasonry and the Catholic Church were already sown.

Putting virtue into practice: The first philanthropic societies

During the final decades before the French Revolution, the concept of philanthropy evolved. The virtue and philosophical idea also became a doctrine of action and an emerging social movement of reformist elites (Duprat 1993; Lambelet 2014). Inspired by Enlightenment philosophers, progressive members of the nobility and bourgeoisie—industrialists, bankers, physicians, scientists, philosophers, and public officials—founded the first philanthropic societies. In 1780, the *Société philanthropique de Paris* was created by seven men (including Savalette de Langes and Saint-Martin, two prominent freemasons) to pool resources and ideas in order to support the poor in Paris and to restore their dignity (Duprat 1993). A similar group was created in Marseilles in 1789 by Guillaume de Paul, another freemason (Beaurepaire 2008).

A key aspect was their secular character and their openness to all opinions and beliefs. Noting the failure of Catholic charity to eradicate poverty, their members looked for innovative ways to help the needy beyond traditional almsgiving and moralization: pensions for the disabled and elderly, nutritive soup kitchens, schools for the blind, petitions to abolish slave trade, and prison reform (Duprat 1993). Philanthropists were not only donors; they were often prolific inventors such as Piarron de Chamousset, a doctor who modernized hospital beds and designed the first mutual benefit societies, or the German pedagogue Basedow who invented a reformist, progressive school called *philanthropinum* inspired by Rousseau's philosophy (Pinloche 1889). The neologism *philanthropisme* was coined to describe this new educational movement as it spread to France.

ECCs become contested as tensions build between social groups

The emergence of philanthropy in France shows that an ECC—which philanthropy certainly is today (Daly 2011)—may not be contested at inception despite its potential to generate disputes. This possibility is neither reflected in Gallie's (1956) seven criteria nor in subsequent refinements of his framework (Collier et al. 2006). Freeden's (1994, p. 157) notion of "decontestation" gives a dynamic perspective on ECCs, but tacitly denotes that ECCs are born contested. Yet both Catholic and secular thinkers used the concept in a positive manner in its initial decades. The concept emerged as compatible with prevailing Catholic institutions. However, Fénelon's original distinction between true and false philanthropy

introduced a strong normative valence to the concept and ambiguity regarding the intentions of its users (Collier et al. 2006). As a consequence, considerable room was left for interpreting what philanthropy is and ought to be.

Another insight from this case is that patterns of conceptual change illustrate growing tensions between social groups who used the focal concept. The late eighteenth-century secular elites in France increasingly defined philanthropy as a superior alternative to traditional Catholic charity. As the examples of Voltaire and French freemasons show, the Catholic Church felt threatened and condemned the new secular ideas increasingly embedded in the emerging concept of philanthropy. While some Catholics contested this new meaning attributed by secular elites to Fénelon's invention,[3] others started to dismiss philanthropy altogether and to defend the traditional and more established concept of charity. Born as a quasi-synonym of charity, philanthropy acquired a new meaning as secular thinkers promoted an alternative interpretation in the context of their opposition with the Catholic Church. Antagonisms between social groups are not confined to the boundaries of a single concept but generally include "opposite, related, and parallel expressions" (Bödeker 1998, p. 55). Indeed, the increasing opposition between Catholic and secular elites in the second half of the eighteenth century materialized in a conceptual conflict between charity and philanthropy.

The revolution and its aftermath: A triumph of philanthropy over charity (1789–1814)

On the eve of the 1789 Revolution, philanthropic societies were part of a proliferation of new organizational forms that flourished in Paris, such as clubs, committees, press groups, and masonic lodges (Beaurepaire 2008; Duprat 1993). Both as an idea and as a practice, philanthropy was an important keyword in liberal and progressive circles. The word philanthropist was used to designate admired scientists and statesmen such as Franklin, Parmentier, or Turgot. In the years surrounding the 1789 Revolution, its meaning evolved and became an equivalent of "patriot" (*patriote*), in other words, a supporter of the Revolution and the French Republic (Bec 1994, pp. 5–7). Desmoulins, a journalist and congressman during the Convention, wrote in 1792 about "the spread of patriotism, that is, of philanthropy, this new religion that will conquer the universe" (Duprat 1996, p. V).

The French Revolution: Weal and woe of "state philanthropy"

The French Revolution abolished intermediary bodies (*corps intermédiaires*) and corporatist privileges affiliated with the *Ancien Régime*, such as guilds, companionships, but also Catholic charitable foundations, which stood between the individual citizen and the state. The Church's and congregations' assets were seized (Coing 1981;

[3] Fénelon's famous controversy with Bossuet about quietism led him to be condemned by Pope Innocent XII in 1699 and banned from the King Louis XIV's court. While he was held in high esteem by many Enlightenment philosophers and freemasons, Catholics were more divided about his legacy overall (Hogu 1920).

Furet 1981). Some present-day observers conclude that the French Revolution was hostile to philanthropy, understood as all types of private giving or initiatives for the public good, hampering its development in the country (Debiesse 2007). Yet the drastic measures of 1789 targeted the Catholic Church and congregations, especially foundations, considered by revolutionaries as unproductive vestiges of the *Ancien Régime*[4] and as latent counterrevolutionary forces.

As Catherine Duprat (1993) demonstrated in "*Le temps des philanthropes*", the Revolution did not prohibit philanthropic societies nor did it discourage private giving from individuals. Under the First Republic, several reform proposals on public assistance, public instruction, slave trade, or foundlings, were directly inspired by early philanthropic experiments. Many officials were philanthropists and the ideal of the "philanthropic statesman" was common at the time. Philanthropic societies like the *Société philanthropique de Paris* briefly received grants from the state or municipalities (Dedeyan 1983). Commonplace oppositions between public and private spheres, government and civil society (Rose and Miller 1992), were irrelevant in this particular moment of French history (Mitsushima 2017).

During the Convention (1792–1795), congressmen proposed several ideas to reform public assistance and make it the state's duty to alleviate poverty. A draft decree from March 1793 stated that "every man is entitled […] to free assistance if he is unable to work. Providing subsistence to the poor is a national burden." On June 28th of the same year, a landmark law provided poor families and widows with annual pensions funded by taxes and the sale of seized Church assets (Mavidal and Laurent 1867). In July 1794, all hospitals were nationalized.

However, under the Directory (1795–1799), hyperinflation crushed the value of pensions and the state ran out of funds to provide direct subsistence to the poor (Jones 1982; Smith 1997). The idea of a mandatory, state-funded subsistence system was abandoned, though communal welfare bureaus (*bureaux de bienfaisance*) were authorized in 1797. Without sufficient public funds, private funding was deemed necessary to achieve the lofty goals set by the Republic and philanthropy's meaning veered away from state-enforced assistance towards private initiatives (Duprat 1993). Unlike religious charity, though, it was expected to be egalitarian and universal, eschewing the perpetuation of feudal inequalities between noble donors and poor recipients (Marais 1999).

Religious tolerance and secularization of philanthropy under Napoleon Bonaparte

Between 1795 and 1801, political instability forced many clubs, lodges, and philanthropic societies to suspend their activities, including the pioneering *Société philanthropique de Paris* (Dedeyan 1983). After the coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799 and his rise to power as First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte was crowned Emperor of the French in 1804. His authoritarian, centralized, and pragmatic regime was seen by the French as a stable alternative to the turmoil that followed 1789. He preserved most improvements from the Revolution, but also pacified the Church-state relations by signing the 1801 Concordat with Pope Pius VII (Furet 1995).

[4] In 1757, Turgot wrote the article "Foundations" for Diderot & d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* and was very critical of several shortcomings of charitable foundations: vanity of founders, loss of tax revenues for the State, immobility of capital, mismanagement and obsolescence over the years.

This agreement restored the Roman Catholic Church's civil status, though not its confiscated assets. In practice, the Church and congregations were allowed to resume their charitable activities and were paid salaries by the state as long as they respected its authority and control. In 1801, donations and bequests to Catholic organizations were cautiously authorized again after government approval. With the creation of the Napoleonic code (*Code civil*) in 1804, private donations to state-approved charitable and philanthropic organizations were given a legal existence (Marais 1999). Consequently, a new generation of both Catholic and secular associations and foundations were created and co-existed (Archambault 1997).

Religious tolerance was a priority of Napoleon to ensure the stability of his rule. Catholicism was not made the official state religion and Judaism and Protestantism were protected by equivalents of Concordat, paving the way for future philanthropic initiatives from religious minorities (Leglaive-Perani 2011). As tensions between the government and religions relaxed, new spiritual movements appeared and developed. In 1796, a Parisian librarian named Chemin-Dupontès created *théophilanthropie*, a familial, humanitarian, and deistic cult preaching the love of God and of mankind (Chantin 2003). It was established to be a natural, rational, and tolerant religion, able to reconcile all faiths and mixing various religious and moral traditions. Much to the Catholic Church's dismay, theophilanthropy was a popular cult among elites and spread rapidly in cities like Paris, Rouen, and Poitiers. After the cult was banned by the state in 1801, many disciples joined freemasonry (Dachez 2015).

A triumph of philanthropic action in the early nineteenth century

Fueled by the ideals of the Revolution and shaped by the rules set by Napoleon Bonaparte, philanthropy rapidly developed in the first decades of the nineteenth century. A myriad of initiatives flourished in cities such as Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles to tackle social ills. The most popular causes were homelessness and housing, public health, temperance, old and disabled workers, orphans, juvenile offenders, prison reform, death penalty and slavery abolition, encouraging thrift, and insurance and mutual benefit systems (Duprat 1993, 1996). Some activities resembled traditional Catholic charity, including patronage of poor beneficiaries by wealthy benefactors, volunteering for distributing aid, and simple financial gifts.

However, philanthropists also raised awareness and collected funds through public campaigns (*souscriptions*), petitions in the press, or prestigious events (Marais 1999). Beyond giving, some philanthropists were entrepreneurial in their approach. A hero of the Revolution, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, brought the vaccine against smallpox to France in 1800 and created the first savings bank (*Caisse d'Epargne*) in 1818. Philanthropy was political as well. Liberal aristocrats and bourgeois with political activities—ministers, congressmen, public officials—were overrepresented in philanthropic societies and used these organizations to experiment with and to advocate for rational and progressive reforms (Mitsushima 2017). Reflecting the growing status of philanthropic practices in France, a second meaning of the term philanthropist appeared in the *Académie française* dictionary by 1835. Alongside its first meaning ("he who by disposition and natural goodness is inclined to love all men"), a philanthropist was "he who looks for means to improve the fate of his fellow men."

The first decades of the century witnessed the success of a liberal philanthropy promoted by new economic and political elites and its gradual distinction from traditional Catholic charity. Three main differences were noticeable. First, philanthropists trusted science over religious beliefs and grounded their philanthropic action in scientific methods (Jones 1982; Topalov 1999). The first social statistics in France were developed by philanthropic societies, and field surveys and investigations were conducted to understand the roots of social ills (Gérando 1821). Second, philanthropists sought to help the most vulnerable citizens gain autonomy and eschew permanent dependence. This was in sharp contrast with classic almsgiving and patronage, where passive beneficiaries depended on the continued generosity of their wealthy supporters (Kettering 1988). Judging alms as "humiliating for the one who receives it," medical elites like Villermé (1840, p. 148) aimed to "prepare the people for good habits from early childhood" such as savings, good hygiene, and temperance. Third, whereas charitable donations were often anonymous, several philanthropists like Montyon, Gérando, or Champion[5] sought publicity in order to set an example and to influence the state to adopt progressive laws in such areas as slave trade and prison reform (Duprat 1996, pp. 893–896).

Translating ECCs into practices has profound consequences on their meanings

The second phase of this conceptual history shows that translating a concept into organizational practices clarifies its meaning and affects its relationships to rival concepts as well. Applications of an ECC alter what protagonists mean by it and how much it differs from rival concepts. In the present case study, the newly created philanthropic societies diverged from traditional charitable congregations or foundations by developing new fundraising and advocacy techniques and by addressing a wider set of social ills. They often competed for resources to find more efficient solutions to age-old problems. By focusing on scientific reasoning, autonomy of beneficiaries, and publicity, liberal philanthropists such as La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and Gérando helped distinguish philanthropy from charity.

The case also underlines that failure to translate an ECC into workable activities at one point of history can dramatically alter its meaning in the following years and decades. Philanthropy was a keyword of the French Revolution, used by revolutionaries to promote ideals of progress and patriotism and to disparage institutions from the *Ancien Régime*. But as the Republican government failed to translate philanthropy into mandatory, tax-funded public assistance, private provision of such assistance was deemed to be the best available alternative. For the next century or so, philanthropy as "voluntary private initiative" replaced philanthropy as "public assistance." Such practical failures are illustrations of these "accidents" and "minute deviations" that shape the meaning we currently attribute to familiar concepts (Foucault 1984, p. 81).

[5] State councilor Montyon created prizes to reward virtue, literary and scientific achievements. Gérando, a pioneering anthropologist, developed empiric method of visiting the poor to understand the cause of their ills. Champion, a Parisian jeweler wearing a distinctive "little blue coat," gave away all his fortune to the poor (Duprat 1993).

Philanthropy under attack: Catholic reaction and socialist critique (1814–1848)

By viewing philanthropy as an alternative to—and not a synonym of—Catholic charity and supporting the Revolution against monarchy, progressive elites prompted a growing Catholic mistrust against philanthropy during the nineteenth century. Legitimists and conservative Catholics engaged in a critical discourse against secular philanthropy in the 1820s, during the new monarchical regime known as the Restoration (1814–1830). In the following decades, philanthropy will also be criticized from the left for its inability to cure poverty, as socialist ideas spread during the July Monarchy (1830–1848).

The rise of a Catholic critique of philanthropy under Restoration

After the fall of Napoleon in 1814, the Bourbon Restoration and the constitutional monarchy regime led by Louis XVIII (1814–1824) and Charles X (1824–1830) represented a sharp conservative turn. While major institutional change brought about by the Revolution and the Empire was not reversed, symbolic measures were taken to restore the legitimacy of monarchy and the Catholic Church (Tombs 1996). Initially, Louis XVIII ruled alongside moderate public officials and congressmen, but after the Duke of Berry was assassinated in 1820, the ultra-royalist faction gained influence and the moderates abruptly left the state and increased their philanthropic activities (Mitsushima 2017). Ultras eventually brought Charles X to the throne. Fortified by this shift of power, the Church tried to claim back the assets seized during the Revolution and was again allowed to receive real estate as donations and bequests in a 1817 law (Marais 1999).

Conceptually, conservative Catholics increasingly attacked ideas associated with the Enlightenment philosophers and the Revolution (Furet 1995), including philanthropy. Abbé Grégoire, a famous Catholic priest who played a prominent role in the French Revolution, was disparaged in an 1814 pamphlet called “The Philanthropist Unveiled”. In it, philanthropy was considered dangerous because it removed the mediation of God that charity relied on and proposed horizontal relationships between fellow men instead. In royalist journals such as *Mémorial Catholique,* philanthropy was portrayed as a bastardized version of charity imagined by worldy philosophers. In these texts, there were three recurring criticisms of philanthropy as a negative form of charity: its motivation was not devotion but vanity; it was not simple acts but abstract, cosmopolitan ideas; it was not spiritual but merely material support (Duprat 1996, pp. 934–936).

Similar ideas were found in the works on famous Catholic writers. In the second volume of his posthumous “Memoirs from Beyond the Grave,” Chateaubriand (1902, p. 217), an ambassador and minister under Charles X, wrote:

> Every act of philanthropy in which we indulge, every system of which we dream in the interests of humanity, is but the Christian idea turned over, changed in name and too often disfigured: it is always the Word made Flesh!

Balzac’s (1900, p. 177) novel “The Village Rector” expresses roughly the same point through the character of Abbot Bonnet:

> Philanthropy is a sublime error; it tortures the body uselessly, it produces no balm to heal the soul. […] Religion is above these imperfections, for it extends man's life beyond this world.

In response to these attacks from their own ranks, Catholic members of philanthropic societies or journals, such as the secretary of the *Société philanthropique de Paris*, had to justify the use of the concept to its critics. These justifications varied in tone and intensity. Guyot de Fère, the Catholic founder and editor of *Le Philanthrope* journal, wrote in July 1825 that "the philanthropy we refer to is religious philanthropy which, in our eyes, is the purest and the most perfect." Young Catholics and Protestants from the liberal *Société de la morale chrétienne* were less apologetic and defended philanthropy as a more fruitful idea than charity (Duprat 1996, pp. 937–939). As these ideological battles within Catholic journals during the 1820s show, philanthropy was a highly contested concept at the time. For conservative Catholics, philanthropy was a corrupted, godless version of charity without God associated with the French Revolution; for progressive Catholics, it was a modern and universal ideal, extending charity to a wider audience.

Between 1820 and 1830, a growing rivalry developed between ecumenical philanthropic societies and conservative Catholic charities. Increasingly, Catholic charities conditioned their aid on religious instruction for beneficiaries, and sometimes ignored new problems affecting the urban poor (Duprat 1993). Partly for this reason, secular initiatives served a growing number of recipients. In this turf war, Catholic charities also borrowed innovations from philanthropic societies, such as public fundraising campaigns (*souscriptions*) to build or restore churches across the country and to create chairs in Catholic universities (Marais 1999). As a consequence, while charity and philanthropy were intensely opposed as concepts, their practices grew more similar (Duprat 1996, p. 939).

The limits of liberal philanthropy faced with the "social question"

The increasingly authoritarian and unpopular government of Charles X and the deteriorating economic situation of France eventually led to the "1830 Revolution," a three-day uprising in Paris that ended the Restoration. Despite an attempt to establish a new Republic, the constitutional monarchy regime was preserved and power was still exercised by the upper bourgeoisie (Pinkney 1972). In July 1830, Louis-Philippe I, Duke of Orléans, became King of the French. Lasting 18 years, the July Monarchy was characterized by relative stability and peace with France's neighbors, a measured evolution towards a parliamentary system, the early stages of industrialization, and the rise of pauperism among a newly-disenfranchised working class (Castel 1995; Tocqueville 1997). The regime started with a change of political and administrative personnel. A modern, liberal elite, favorable to the principles of 1789 but loyal to monarchy, replaced its conservative counterpart. Many had experience in philanthropic societies, which they used as laboratories for their political careers (Duprat 1993; Mitsushima 2017).

The 1789 Revolution made the French free and equal before the law, abolishing privileges and intermediate bodies of the past like corporations and congregations. Yet it was unclear what type of bonds could exist between individuals and keep French

society together (Blais 2008). By 1830, many considered 1789 as an unfulfilled promise. On the one hand, as the succession of regime changes illustrated, the transition towards democracy was uneasy and limited (Rosanvallon 1990). On the other hand, the first industrial revolution brought about the emergence of a poor and urban underclass working in shops, factories, and mills (Castel 1995). As a result, in cities like Paris and Lille, health epidemics and criminality grew steadily in the 1830s despite the works of many charitable and philanthropic organizations (Marais 1999).

Pauperism became a central concern for the elite as several revolts of workers in factories, such as silk workers in Lyon (1831 and 1834), were violently suppressed by the government. Intense intellectual and political debates in France addressed the "social question," (*question sociale*) which also rose in other industrializing nations across Europe (Castel 1995; Tocqueville 1997). By 1830, philanthropy increasingly appeared inadequate to alleviate poverty, which was thought as a product of socio-economic circumstances and no longer as destiny or as the result of individual failings (Duprat 1996; Ewald 1986). As several historians showed, the resources committed by philanthropists were trivial compared to their claims and to the needs of the people (Delalande 2011; Marais 1999; Topalov 1999). In the midst of growing inequalities and social tensions between classes, some questioned whether philanthropy was anything more than superficial gestures of the well-off to appease their consciences.

Philanthropy became contested by wider audiences in the 1830s. Flaubert's novels painted a derisive portrait of philanthropists as well-thinking and tedious bourgeois, whose actions were full of silliness, obsession with science, and vainglory (Gothot-Mersch 1997). Journalists and writers also fostered a negative stereotype of philanthropists as naïve, zealous, and mediocre individuals who had no other career plans (Duprat 1996, pp. 997–1002). Throughout the century, the pun *filous en troupe* ("troop of crooks") was popular to ridicule followers of theophilanthropy and was later used by prisoners to mock philanthropists who visited them (Laurent 1890; Mathiez 1903). In short, failing to live up to its ambitions, philanthropy became heavily contested, not only by conservative Catholics but also by freethinkers and "rabid liberal[s]" like Flaubert[6] (Brown 2006, p. 350). The word philanthropist, which had been celebrated in liberal circles by then, started to be ridiculed by some as a caricature of bourgeois do-gooder.

The rise of socialist ideas and the left's critique of philanthropy

Beginning in the 1830s, other ideas and systems to address the social question spread throughout Europe and gained influence in France as well: social Catholicism, mutualism, anarchism, and, most importantly, socialism (Archambault 2001; Castel 1995). While Saint-Simon, the forerunner of French socialism, described himself as a philanthropist in the early 1800s, other influential socialist thinkers criticized philanthropy in their writings. Fourier often wrote about "the mask of philanthropy" used by hypocritical leaders to serve their interests. He criticized the misconceptions of philanthropy in one of his posthumous essays: "we invent only remedies worse than the ills. […] Our

[6] In a letter to Ms. Royer de Chantepie written in March 1857, Flaubert wrote: "I hate despotism. I am a rabid liberal, which is why socialism seems to me a pedantic horror that will spell the death of all art and morality."

philanthropic illusions are as efficient as our sanitary illusions, which resulted in three or four plagues instead of one" (Fourier 1847, p. 56).

Proudhon, theorist of mutualism and anarchism, thought that philanthropy kept the poor passive and dependent on the structures of bourgeois society. He wrote that "this democratic philanthropy, which does not tolerate slavery, perfectly puts up with the most insolent exploitation" (Proudhon 1863, p. 305). Instead of philanthropy, he advocated for voluntary, mutual initiatives by workers to organize their independence from capitalists. Interestingly, Proudhon (1848, p. 102) was equally critical of any form of state-enforced redistribution to the poor, which he also called philanthropy: "The people do not want a poor tax […], they demand the end of poverty. The poor tax is philanthropy, not organization."

Considering its influence in France since the 1850s, it is necessary to mention here the scientific socialist thought of Marx and Engels. In their first co-authored book in 1845, "The Holy Family" (Marx and Engels 1844), they scorned the main character of a French best-seller, *Les Mystères de Paris*, who practiced philanthropy to help the working class of Paris (Sue 1844). Engels's (1845) book published the same year, "Condition of the Working Class in England," is peppered with criticism of philanthropy as the hypocrisy of capitalists turned philanthropists and the gap between what they exploit from workers and what they give back:

> How can one be otherwise than filled with wrath and resentment against a class which boasts of philanthropy and self-sacrifice, while its one object is to fill its purse *a tout prix*?

And:

> As though you rendered the proletarians a service in first sucking out their very life-blood and then practicing your self-complacent, Pharisaic philanthropy upon them, placing yourselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when you give back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them!

Marx and Engels's sharp criticism of philanthropy mirrored their attacks on Christian charity, which is well documented (Draper 1971). To them, both concepts were blockades that the ruling class used against the emancipation of the proletariat. Socialist ideas gained influence in the 1840s as demonstrations and strikes of workers hit Paris and several other cities. Meanwhile, republican leaders advocated for electoral reforms and protested against the corruption of the regime, which had taken a conservative turn. Workers and students took the streets in February 1848 and the July Monarchy was over after three days of violent clashes.

ECCs are linguistic vehicles for competition between multiple social groups

In the previous phase (1789–1814), I showed how translating an ECC into practice allows to clarify its meaning but also affects its relationships to rival concepts. Philanthropic societies of the post-1789 years engaged in innovative practices that distinguished them from Catholic charitable organizations. However, after the 1801 Concordat and especially during the Restoration (1814–

1830), Catholic charities reinforced their activities and the competition with philanthropic societies intensified. They borrowed innovations from their secular counterparts and aside from religious instruction, their practices grew more similar from 1820 onwards (Duprat 1996). Once translated into practice by historical actors, a concept can reveal to be more similar to its rival concepts than what is expected from a purely abstract viewpoint. ECCs should thus be understood as linguistic vehicles used by polarized groups to achieve their own political goals.

What this third phase (1814–1848) also illustrates is that a single concept can "acquire a variety of meanings in the course of its diffusion to varied social groups" (Merton and Barber 2004, p. 21) with opposing views and interests. ECCs are not merely vehicles for perpetual struggle between two polar opposites (e.g., secular versus religious thinkers): simultaneously or in successive waves, the contestation can attract additional social groups who attack or defend the focal concept in order to advance their own goals—and rival concepts. In our case, philanthropy in France was exposed to two main critiques: by Catholic conservatives from the 1820s, then by socialist thinkers from the 1840s. While they criticized philanthropy and promoted rival concepts (charity, socialism) to achieve the public good, both groups also strongly opposed each other. Conceptual contestation appears as a complex, multi-stakeholder, and open-ended process.

Philanthropy, solidarity, and the dawn of a welfare state (1848–1914)

The Second Republic was proclaimed in February 1848 and after a few months of transition, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was the first French president elected by universal male suffrage (Furet 1995). In the new Constitution, the state was expected "to provide public assistance to the elderly, children and the infirm," but the congress would later oppose providing assistance beyond a bare minimum (Smith 1997, p. 1008). Congressmen and ministers with philanthropic experience proposed a handful of progressive reforms regarding unsanitary housing, mutual benefit societies, and savings banks (Duprat 1993). Access to municipal hospitals for the poor was improved in an 1851 law. But even for republican political leaders, voluntary associations such as cooperatives and mutual-aid societies were preferred to mandatory reforms to cure social ills (Nord 1994, p. 837). The Second Republic proved to be short-lived, as newly elected president Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte organized a coup in 1851 to extend his rule, leading to a new plebiscitary regime: the Second Empire.

After an authoritarian first period (1852–1860), the regime grew more liberal in the next decade. Strikes (1864) and cooperatives (1867) were legalized. Charitable gifts and bequests were encouraged and controlled through strict rules and detailed statistics—especially for ecclesiastic initiatives (Marais 1999). The French administration simplified and improved the processes through which individuals could donate to authorized organizations, further integrating philanthropy and charity within the state apparatus (Cohen 2003). Meanwhile, the specter of creating the equivalent of the English Poor Law—the ineffective and costly system of poor relief in England—in France was so strong that it prevented any form of mandatory social legislation (Smith 1997). To fund social welfare, the government thus needed a high level of private giving in the country (Marais 1999).

Contesting "legal charity": Is public assistance inevitable?

In France, public assistance to the poor existed since the sixteenth century but had remained extremely limited and localized. Local hospitals and welfare bureaus were absent in most cities and imposed strict conditions to give aid (Weiss 1983, pp. 50–51). In contrast, the English Poor Law was both older and more extensive. While the French Revolution's objectives included providing assistance to every man unable to work, these had been abandoned shortly after for a lack of sufficient public funds (Duprat 1993; Jones 1982). Despite growing evidence that charity and philanthropy were insufficient to address social problems in France, memories of the failed Convention experiments and the persistence of extreme poverty in England despite the Poor Law fueled critiques against public assistance (Smith 1997).

In his influential "Essay on the principle of population," Malthus (1798) argued that unconditional transfers to the poor encouraged idleness and overpopulation. Similar ideas spread in France in the words of conservative Catholics and liberal economists alike. The concept of "legal charity" (*charité légale*) was scorned by Catholic thinkers because of putative harmful effects on both sides: ingratitude of beneficiaries and absence of salvation for donors (Naville 1836). Tocqueville (1997, p. 30) wrote in his "Memoir on Pauperism" that "any measure which establishes legal charity on a permanent basis and gives it an administrative form thereby creates an idle and lazy class, living at the expense of the industrial and working class." He thought that mandatory public assistance ruined the moral bond between donors and beneficiaries.

Liberal economists also criticized "legal charity" because it increased taxation and discouraged work, leading to class polarization and social strife (Smith 1997). By 1850, most liberal thinkers in France strongly opposed all forms of "law-enforced charity" (Spencer 1851, p. 324), which French economist Bastiat (1850, p. 22) called "false philanthropy" (*fausse philanthropie*)—mirroring Socrates' critique in Fénelon's *Dialogues*. For them, true philanthropy should remain private and voluntary, while assistance through forced taxation and redistribution was nothing more than legal plunder. In January 1850, a parliamentary committee published a report opposing law-enforced assistance and defending the virtues of voluntary initiative.

Yet fewer and fewer observers deemed philanthropy or charity sufficient to address the magnitude of France's social ills. Even Tocqueville (1997, p. 36) acknowledged that public assistance was necessary for "inevitable evils such as the helplessness of infancy, the decrepitude of old age, sickness, insanity," and "in times of public calamities," provided it was strictly limited to certain categories and situations. Social Catholics and republicans increasingly advocated for stronger government intervention to redistribute the wealth created by capitalism (Smith 1997). Strikingly, aside from Bastiat, critics of "legal charity" never mentioned the term philanthropy. The conceptual opposition between charity and philanthropy, central during and after 1789, apparently lost importance in intellectual debates of the second half of the nineteenth century.

An alternative conceptualization: From philanthropy to solidarity

A new concept emerged to replace philanthropy and charity, eventually becoming the leading principle of the Third Republic entering the *Belle Époque* era (1879–1914): solidarity (*solidarité*, see Table 2). As "a means of restoring harmony and social

integration in society" (Stjernø 2009, p. 39), the idea of solidarity has several roots in the post-1789 French intellectual life: Saint-Simon's analogy of society as a human body with interdependent parts, social Catholicism's critique of individualism, and freemasonry's universalist creed (Blais 2008).

When it appeared in the early nineteenth century, solidarity was a legal concept in the Napoleonic code describing joint responsibility of debtors or creditors (Hayward 1959). Years later it was translated into a social concept by writer and philosopher Pierre Leroux (1840) in his influential essay, *De l'humanité*. Leroux criticized Catholic charity because it could not reconcile self-love with the love of others, and concealed the natural affection between humans (Stjernø 2009). He proposed to replace Catholic charity with a secular, rational, and scientific alternative that he labeled solidarity (Blais 2008). Surprisingly, Leroux hardly ever mentioned philanthropy despite many similarities between these concepts (Silver 1994, p. 537). Like philanthropy, solidarity was thought as both a fact and an ideal (Hayward 1959). But unlike it, solidarity could not solely rely on the goodwill of individuals.

Despite its "vagueness and logical inconsistencies" (Weiss 1983, p. 57), the concept of solidarity gained popularity as a "quasi-contract" between members of society by which they recognize their interdependence, across both space and time. Individuals are thus "indebted" to other members of society in present, past, and future times (Blais 2008). Accordingly, it does not rely on the moral obligation of individuals but on the legal obligation of society, controlled and enforced by the state (Hayward 1959, p. 282). Sociology pioneers Comte and Durkheim built their theories upon Leroux's insights on the need to combine individual freedom and the collective requirements of life in society (Stjernø 2009).

Solidarity soon became a political concept as well. After the military defeat against Prussia in 1870, France experienced another regime change and a short period of instability. The Third Republic was proclaimed and parliamentary elections in 1871 brought conservatives to power (Furet 1995; Tombs 1996). After the bloody repression of the Commune upheaval in Paris and despite attempts to restore the monarchy, the 1876 parliamentary elections were won by a republican majority, which became the chief political force in the country. In particular, radicals and radical-socialists emerged on the left and "sought to unite the working and middle classes around a program of social progress for all." (Hayward 1959, p. 277). Opposed to Marxist socialism, they believed in private property, secularism, and progressive reforms.

Radical republicans made solidarity their conceptual keystone. Looking for "a middle way between capitalism and socialism" (Smith 1997, p. 1021), they thought that state action was necessary to address "the complex problems raised by the rapid and interrelated economic, political and social changes" (Hayward 1959, p. 280). Radicals and radical-socialists feared that the growing polarization between laissez-faire liberalism and revolutionary socialism would destabilize the Third Republic and lead to new upheavals (Silver 1994). A radical statesman, Léon Bourgeois (1896) published a very influential essay called *Solidarité* in which he helped to theorize solidarity as a doctrine. Under Bourgeois's leadership, radicals and radical-socialists proposed detailed schemes of social reform, translating solidarity from a political idea to a set of policies (Hayward 1959, p. 273).

The "reformist nebula" and the legalization of public assistance

Regarding social welfare policies, France was considered a laggard among European states by the 1870s (Nord 1994; Weiss 1983). During the Second Empire and the beginning of the Third Republic, public assistance slowly progressed but initiatives such as the *bureaux de bienfaisance*—the first local authorities dedicated to poverty relief—remain voluntary, localized, and limited in scope (Smith 1997, p. 1013). For long, republicans eschewed social welfare policies because the latter entailed compulsion and proved the existence of a class society, which was contrary to the 1789 ideals (Hatzfeld 1971). Increasingly, it was believed that the misfortunes of modern life could not be blamed solely on individual faults but also on collective problems such as harmful working conditions and poor education (Nord 1994, p. 836).

In the aftermath of the defeat to Prussia, several factors pushed the French political elites to foster change: the discovery of Bismarck's effective social insurance system (Mitchell 1991), the fear of revolutionary socialism (Elwitt 1986), and hygienic concerns about decline and degeneration of the French population (Schneider 1990). In the 1880s, the government engaged in a series of major and lasting reforms: mandatory, free, and secular school systems (1881–1882), freedom of press (1881), and legalization of workers' unions (1884). In particular, the school reform generated a bitter debate between the anticlerical wing of the republican majority and the Church, congregations, and conservative parties (Rosanvallon 1990).

Social reforms would follow suit. An eclectic coalition of radicals, radical-socialists, social Catholics, and moderate liberals formed a "reformist nebula" (Topalov 1999). The group was led by Henri Monod, a senior official in charge of the national administration of public assistance, and congressmen like Léon Bourgeois and Paul Strauss, who argued that mandatory public assistance was the culmination of the 1789 Revolution ideals and a logical next step after the successful school system reforms (Smith 1997, pp. 1028–1029).

They organized international conferences from 1889 to 1914 during which reformist ideas were debated. Representatives from private charitable and philanthropic organizations were invited (Topalov 1996). Radicals and radical-socialists wanted to accomplish the French Revolution's ideals by making public assistance a state duty, whereas liberals and Catholics leaned towards the English model of efficient, minimal state intervention mixed with a strong, professionalized private sector. A consensus emerged over the years: public assistance should be a legal obligation, but only for indigent persons who are physically unable to provide for themselves. The able-bodied poor were to be excluded from public assistance and taken care of by private organizations (Topalov 1999; Weiss 1983). Rigorous, scientific enquiries should be conducted on a case-by-case basis to organize this division of labor between public assistance and private charity or philanthropy.

The medical assistance law (1893), giving free access to medical care to the poor, was the first milestone for the reformist group. Other reforms included the work accident insurance law (1898), which provided injured workers with compensation, and the poverty law for the elderly, infirm, and incurably sick (1905), arguably "the most important act of poor relief accomplished by the Third Republic before the First World

War" (Weiss 1983, p. 1974) with more than 500,000 beneficiaries signed up the first year. The year 1905 is also famous for the law on the separation of the churches and state, which officially enacted state secularism in France. While it was a shock for many Catholics, the law endorsed an ongoing trend and established a truce between the French Republic and Catholic Church. This first wave of public assistance reforms paved the way for further reforms in the 1930s and especially after 1945, when the French government became a full-fledged welfare state (Ewald 1986; Rosanvallon 1981).

ECCs change as the result of dialectical processes

The final phase (1848–1914) of this conceptual history hints at the *dialectical* dynamics of conceptual change. Indeed, an ECC can be part of a thesis-antithesis-synthesis ensemble that arises when social groups—in particular intellectuals—change their concepts in attempting to solve problems (Farr 1989). Moreover, previously rival concepts can be grouped when criticized by proponents of a rising third concept. From antonyms, two rival concepts become synonyms when social actors successfully propose an alternative that addresses their weaknesses and does not suffer from the stigma associated with continual contestation.

The present case study documents the remarkable evolution of the conceptual relationships between philanthropy and charity. *Philanthropie* was first coined by a Catholic theologian and used as a synonym of *charité* in much of the eighteenth century. However, as Enlightenment philosophers and freemasons started to use it as well, they gave it an alternative meaning as a secular, scientific alternative to the traditional, charitable acts of Catholic Church and congregations. Competition between both social groups under Restoration reinforced this antagonism. Eventually, as secularism triumphed in the late nineteenth century, the contestation over meaning lost in intensity and soon both concepts were used interchangeably by different social groups. For socialists in particular, charity and philanthropy became synonyms once again as bourgeois stratagems to protect their interests. In the 1870 issue of the *Nouveau Dictionnaire Universel*, published by Maurice Lachâtre, a friend of Proudhon, philanthropy is ultimately presented as follows:

> There has been a desire to make a radical distinction between charity and philanthropy, but these two words basically express a single feeling which every tender and generous soul feels for man in general, and which leads her to seek all means to relieve man of his ills.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, philanthropy and charity became so stigmatized that alternative concepts were necessary to tackle the unresolved issues of poverty and progress. Solidarists like Léon Bourgeois (1896) considered charity *and* philanthropy as a first attempt (thesis) to achieve public good, and socialism as a reaction (antithesis) against the thesis' contradictions and flaws—namely the voluntary nature and limited scale of transfers. To them, *solidarité,* understood as state-enforced social welfare policies while protecting the institutions of capitalism, was the correct synthesis.

Discussion: Towards historically contested concepts

This article shows that what makes a concept essentially contested may not only reside in its rival definitions, but also in the way multiple actors use it over time to achieve specific political goals. The studied case shows how contestation over philanthropy played out. Before 1789, Catholics viewed it as another name for the theological virtue of charity, whereas for secular philosophers, it was grounded in the natural goodness of man and not in religion. During the revolutionary period, there were debates as to whether philanthropy was just an abstract ideal or a doctrine of action and whether it should result into state-enforced public assistance or private initiatives. Under Restoration, strong disagreements opposed conservative Catholics, who viewed philanthropy as a godless, bastardized version of charity, and progressive Catholics and Protestants for whom it was a modern ideal compatible with Christian principles. In the 1830s, some liberals defined it as a progressive and effective way to deal with social problems, but for others it was naïve and insufficient to solve them. For socialists in the same era, philanthropy was nothing but a hypocritical strategy of capitalist bourgeois to protect their interests, an impediment to real social progress.

By taking context seriously, shifting the attention from ideas to "the various agents who used the idea, and on their varying situations and intentions in using it" (Skinner 1969, p. 38), and tracing concepts in specific historical periods, the method of conceptual history addresses the main limitations of the ECC framework (Ball 2002). With this study, I make five contributions to research on ECCs, conceptual contestation, and conceptual change.

First, I show that contestation is not a permanent feature of ECCs but arises through a historical process of political conflict between social groups. Hence the adverb "essentially" in ECCs appears misleading: while the potential for contestation is embedded in the fuzzy definition of the concept, actual contestation ebbs and flows through history. In my case study, Catholic and secular thinkers in France used philanthropy and charity as synonyms in the first decades of the eighteenth century, showing that consensual uses are possible for long periods of time before contestation arises. The open character of ECCs leaves social groups free to interpret them in various directions and patterns (Collier et al. 2006). However, the ideas of "decontestation" and "closure" (Care 1973; Freeden 1994) improperly suggest that ECCs are necessarily contested at birth. Seemingly consensual concepts can *become* contested as various social groups use them in controversial ways to achieve divergent political goals (Ball 1998; Bothello and Djelic 2018). Conceptual contestation should thus be studied as a fluid process, not as a timeless essence.

Second, I argue that treating ECCs as single units of analysis is defective, because one cannot fully understand the reasons for contesting a concept by insulating the focal concept from opposite, related, and parallel expressions forming "constellations which make up entire schemes or belief systems" (Ball et al. 1989, p. 33). For example, it would not make much sense to study the concept of stakeholder in management studies without studying its profound ties with that of shareholder (Miles 2012). In this study, I show that *philanthropie* was not only contested in itself but also in relationship with *charité* and *solidarité* (see Table 2). Conceptual historians have emphasized that "a single concept can hardly be understood without reference to other concepts" and "concepts organized into structured aggregates define each other reciprocally." (Bödeker 1998, p. 55) The study of ECCs should not only comprise the focal concept, but also key related concepts.

Third, I uncover the process by which concepts become contested and the nature of the contestation may change over time, underlining how conflicting social groups drive the contestation and use concepts as linguistic vehicles to achieve their political goals. Philanthropy and its related concepts (charity, solidarity) each had proponents and opponents among the various groups involved in the "battlefields" of ideas (Ball 1998, p. 82), including progressive and conservative Catholics, liberals, and socialists. Challengers may adopt new, alternative concepts to criticize the meanings associated with older, rival concepts used by incumbent groups. Yet it would be simplistic to reduce this conflict to a duel of ancients against moderns. Three or more social groups with opposing view and interests can contest a single concept for various reasons. Studies of ECCs have remained elusive about the identities and intentions of "contestant users." Leading scholars have received disproportionate attention (Miles 2012; Skinner 1969) in comparison to practitioners, writers, and journalists who also manipulated the same concepts. Future research on ECCs could focus on how a wider range of individuals and groups used concepts as means to achieve specific ends.

Fourth, translating an ECC into a set of practices has catalytic, and often unintended, consequences for its meaning. As concrete applications alter what protagonists mean by a concept, they also change a concept's relationship vis-à-vis rival concepts, either clarifying or obfuscating its distinctive nature. As detailed in the case study, philanthropic societies launched innovative practices that distinguished them from traditional Catholic charitable organizations. Yet the latter eventually borrowed innovations from the former and their practices grew increasingly similar while their discourses remained in sharp contrast. This decoupling of theory and practice regarding rivals concepts shows that confusion and ambiguity, which is a cornerstone of ECCs (Collier et al. 2006; Freeden 1994), does not automatically disappear once historical actors translate them into practice. Also, as the short episode of "state philanthropy" after the French Revolution illustrates, failure to translate an ECC into workable activities can dramatically alter its meaning in the following years and decades (Foucault 1984), branching off from established meanings from one point of history.

Finally, this case study reveals the dialectical dimension of conceptual change (Seo and Creed 2002). As illustrated by the interconnected fortunes of *charité, philanthropie,* and *solidarité* in France (see Table 2), contesting parties evolved in their understandings and usages of concepts. Liberal elites of the 1789 Revolution used philanthropy as an alternative to Catholic charity. Later, socialist thinkers of the 1840s bundled both concepts in their criticism of the hypocrisy of the dominant classes. Solidarists of the Third Republic viewed solidarity as the synthesis between charity and philanthropy (thesis) and revolutionary socialism (antithesis). From antonyms, rival concepts can become synonyms if social actors propose an alternative concept that addresses their weaknesses and avoid the stigma attached to them. "Decontestation" (Freeden 1994) does not inevitably lead to wide acceptance as conceptual contestation diminishes when the focal concept loses centrality in intellectual debates.

In summary, I propose a central role for the tools of conceptual history to study ECCs as "historically contested concepts" (HCCs). As Collier et al. (2006, p. 214) note, the ECC framework has difficulties "distinguishing contested from noncontested concepts" because Gallie (1956) did not provide a detailed procedure to discriminate between contested and contest*able* concepts. This difficulty can be resolved by paying more attention to the relations between rival concepts, to the multiple social groups using them

for political purposes, to the complex articulation between theory and practice, and to the dialectical dynamics by which concepts change. HCCs are not "*forever* open to dispute and disagreement" (Ball 2002, p. 21) because contestation varies in both content and intensity through history, alternating between periods of great effervescence and relative insignificance. Scholars interested in studying HCCs in social science will find allies in conceptual historians such as Koselleck and Skinner, whose research methods are worth discovering beyond the confines of social history and political theory.

Bridging conceptual history and ECCs, the HCC approach can be applied to other concepts, in both past and contemporary settings. As concepts are key artifacts of organizational life, this research agenda could be usefully linked to the growing interest for historical data, methods, and knowledge in organizational and management research (Bucheli and Wadhwani 2014; Maclean et al. 2016). So far, only a few scholars have started to follow this direction. For instance, Bothello and Djelic's (2018) study of organizational environmentalism since the mid-twentieth century uses a conceptual history to develop a path generation theory of institutional trajectories. These authors also developed an interesting comparative analysis of "moral hazard" and "limited liability" (Djelic and Bothello 2013), tracing both concepts over several centuries in order to understand their structural link. A similar approach could be used for other pairs of concepts in organization studies such as "structure" and "agency" (Giddens 1979; Heugens and Lander 2009).

Another fruitful avenue would be to connect research on ECCs with the growing stream of organizational studies on the diffusion of "contested practices" such as golden parachutes, downsizing, or stock option pay in corporations (Fiss et al. 2012; Jung and Mun 2017; Sanders and Tuschke 2007). Despite stiff resistance from key stakeholder groups, some of these practices get eventually adopted and diffuse within and between organizational fields (Briscoe and Safford 2008). These studies show that board composition, CEO experience, and adoption by former opponents are some of the factors explaining this counterintuitive result. Further research could explore the role of rhetoric and struggles over the meaning of underlying concepts in the adoption of contested practices (Green et al. 2009). Diffusion and institutionalization of contested practices may be partially driven by changes in the way actors define and use concepts associated with them.

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