

1994

## A Review of Eleanor L. Brilliant, "The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity"

Mike W. Martin

*Chapman University*, [mwmartin@chapman.edu](mailto:mwmartin@chapman.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/philosophy\\_articles](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/philosophy_articles)



Part of the [Business Law, Public Responsibility, and Ethics Commons](#), [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Martin, Mike W. A Review of Eleanor L. Brilliant, "The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity." *Ethics* 104.3 (1994): 675.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Science and Technology Faculty Articles and Research at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Faculty Articles and Research by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [laughtin@chapman.edu](mailto:laughtin@chapman.edu).

---

## A Review of Eleanor L. Brilliant, "The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity"

### Comments

This review was originally published in *Ethics*, volume 104, issue 3, in 1994.

### Copyright

University of Chicago Press

Brilliant, Eleanor L. *The United Way: Dilemmas of Organized Charity*.  
New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. Pp. 382. \$17.50 (paper).

Philosophers have given philanthropy scant attention (with one notable exception: Ellen Frankel Paul et al., eds., *Beneficence, Philanthropy and the Public Good* [New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987]). Brilliant's intriguing historical study of umbrella charity organizations, rich in case studies, poses questions which invite philosophical attention, especially concerning issues of social justice. What are the responsibilities of individuals and corporations in helping others through private philanthropic giving? How should priorities be set in voluntary giving for public purposes, both by individuals and by directors of charitable organizations? Is a reasonable consensus about worthy ends possible in democracies? How can fair access in giving at the workplace be assured for all worthy causes, especially controversial feminist, minority, and environmental causes? How can coercion be prevented when philanthropy becomes institutionalized at the workplace? What does it mean for philanthropic organizations to be accountable, both to their constituencies and to the wider public? The last question has special urgency as United Way continues to confront the worst scandal in its history, a crisis precipitated after Brilliant's book was published, when United Way's director, William Aramony, was forced in 1992 to resign amidst public outrage over his \$463,000 salary/benefit package and charges of his misuse of United Way money.

M. W. M.