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

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## **Comments**

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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.