

MAECENATA INSTITUT  
FÜR PHILANTHROPIE UND ZIVILGESELLSCHAFT

# The History of Philanthropy

Dr. Rupert Graf Strachwitz



# What am I going to talk about?

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- 1) Introducing myself and my organisation
- 2) Some general remarks
- 3) Donors
- 4) Philanthropy in History
- 5) A European and international perspective
- 6) Philanthropy in modern society



# Introducing myself and my organisation



## Non-executive director and senior strategic advisor, Maecenata Foundation

- academic background: political science, history, history of art
- 40 years track record in professional and volunteer work, research, teaching, writing, and public and individual consultancy in the field of civil society
- founded Maecenata Foundation in 2010 (was CEO until 2024)
- teaches at universities in Germany and abroad and lectures world-wide, approx. 1,000 publications



MAECENATA STIFTUNG

MAECENATA FOUNDATION

Think Tank and watch dog

for civil society and philanthropy

1. Maecenata Institute
2. Transnational Giving Programme
3. Tocqueville Forum
4. MENA Study Centre



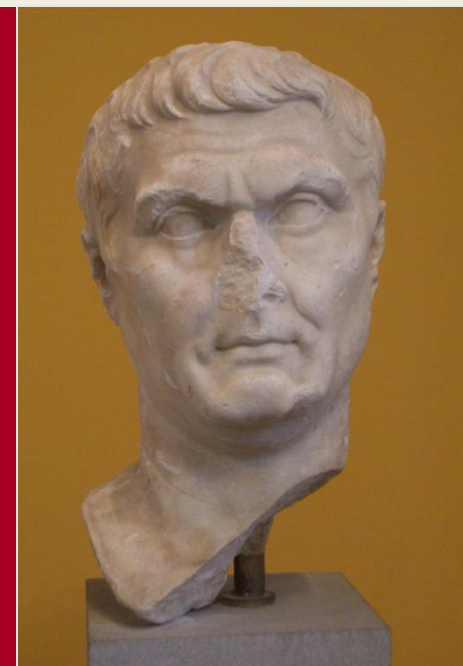
*Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (70 – 4 BC)*



# MAECENATA FOUNDATION

## What do we do?

- We conduct **academic research**
- We **publish** (in internal and external media)
- We **enable** (transnational giving)
- We **document** (library &c.)
- We **inform** (web site, social media, news letter, press releases)
- We **intervene** (developments, projects, framework)
- We **help move the issue** of civil society and philanthropy as necessary prerequisites of an open society.





# Some general remarks

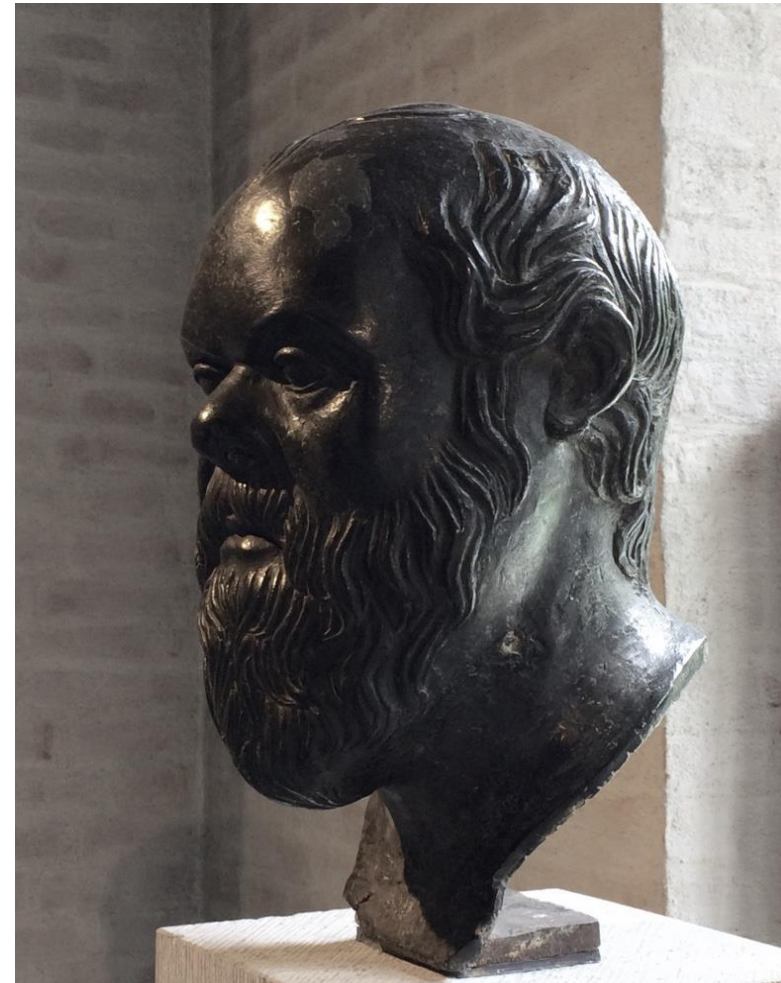


# Philanthropy ?

Philanthropy is voluntary social engagement with others, by

- sharing
- volunteering
- giving
- etc.

**Socrates: „I am a philanthropist, because I share my wisdom with my listeners free of charge.“**





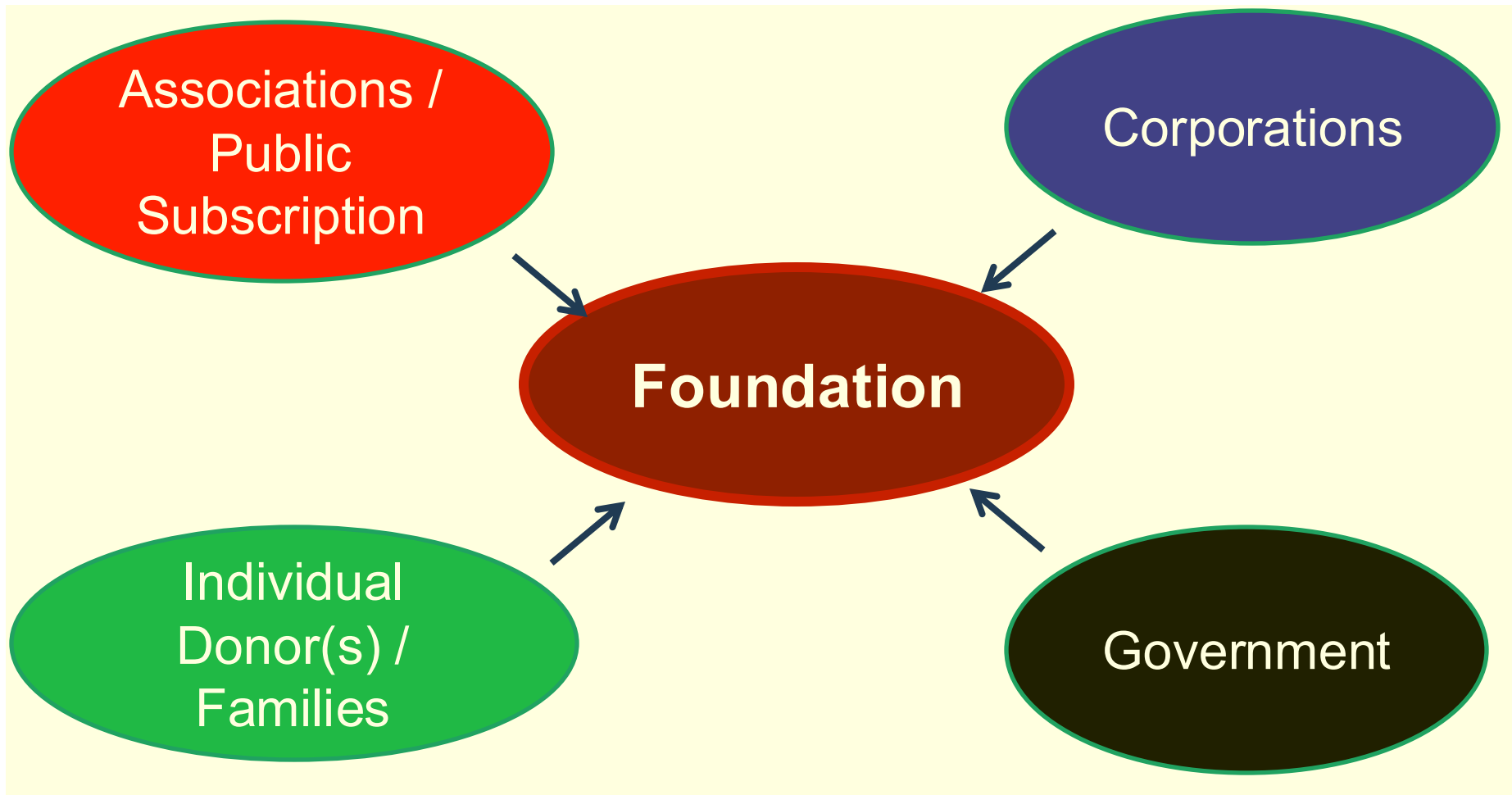
# Philanthropy ? Foundations ?

- **Equalling philanthropy with setting up a foundation or with foundation activity is not correct.**
- **Equalling foundations or philanthropy with grant-making is not correct.**
- **Foundations are not a modern invention. They may be called an anthropological constant.**





# Who starts a foundation ?





## FOUNDATION

- ❖ is not a legal term.
- ❖ may exist in a number of legal forms

There is no regular form of foundation.

The US-type of grant-making charitable foundation endowed with liquid assets is **one** model, but **not the** model.

Not every founder can endow his/her foundation.



## Foundations may be

- ❖ operating
- ❖ grant-making
- ❖ benevolent
- ❖ ownership

or a combination of all these

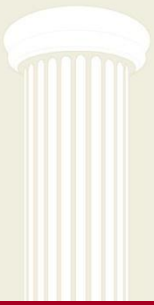


## Operating Foundations may own and/or manage

- ❖ hospitals
- ❖ old peoples homes
- ❖ museums
- ❖ universities
- ❖ schools
- ❖ projects
- ❖ &c.



# Donors



A donor / philanthropist who gives

**ideas and / or resources**

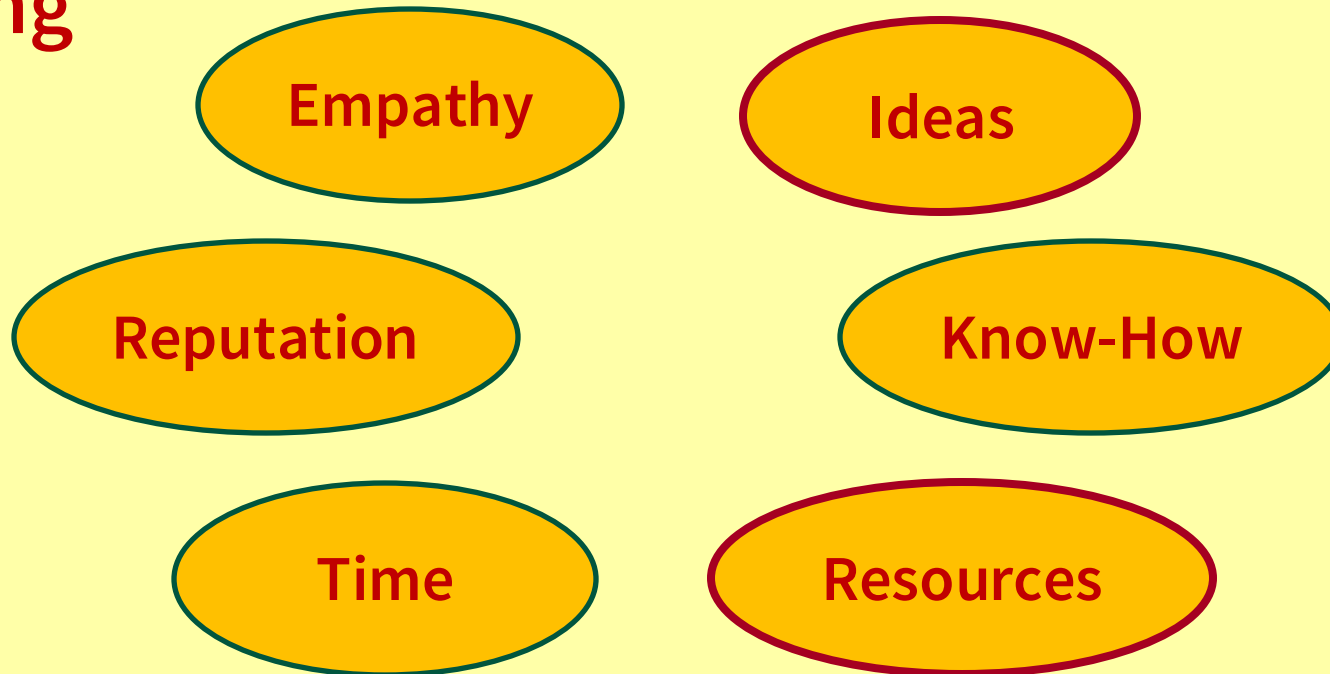
to a separated entity,

thus creates a foundation.

Not every philanthropist does that.



## Giving



**of one's own free will, and with no claim to remuneration**



Two philanthropists

Fayaztepa, Uzbekistan

2nd century AD



Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo:  
The Virgin adoring  
the Child Jesus

The Virgin adoring  
the Child Jesus

with a couple who  
were the donors

Italy

1527



# Donors for education and care for the needy – no resources of their own

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**August Hermann Francke**  
Halle 1663-1727



**Thomas Coram**  
The Foundling Hospital  
London 1668-1751



# Donors for the arts – the endowment was works of art

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**Sir Peter Francis Bourgeois**

London  
1756-1811

**Samuel Baron v. Brukenthal**  
Hermannstadt/Sibiu, Romania  
1721-1803

**Johann Friedrich Städel**

Frankfurt  
1728-1816

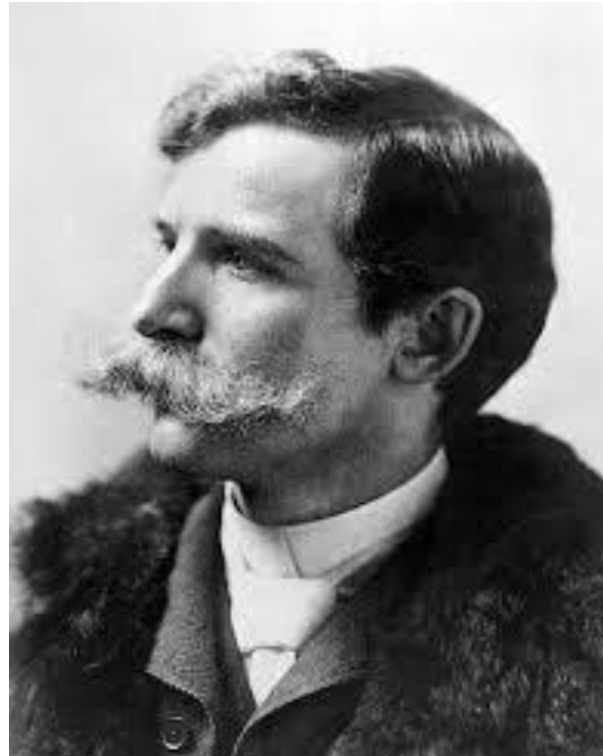


# Donors for research – with large endowments

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**Ernst Abbe**  
Carl Zeiss Stiftung  
Jena  
1840-1905



**Sir Henry Solomon  
Wellcome**, London  
1853-1936

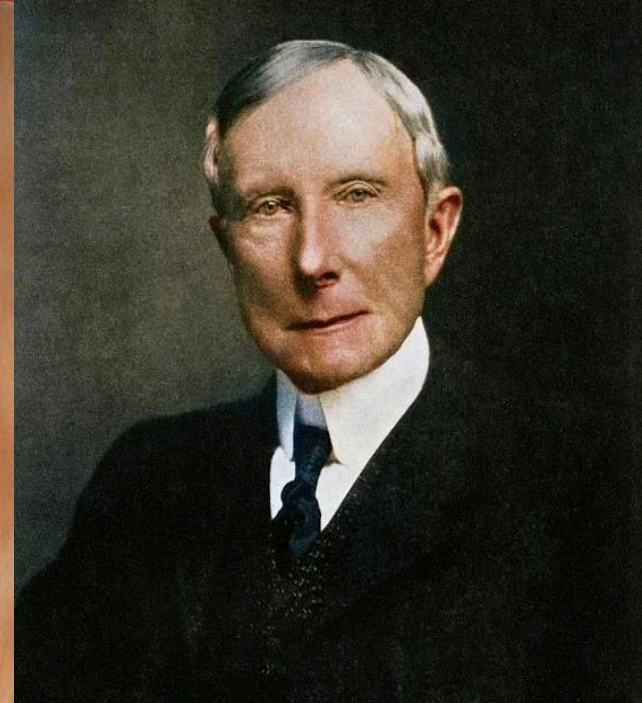
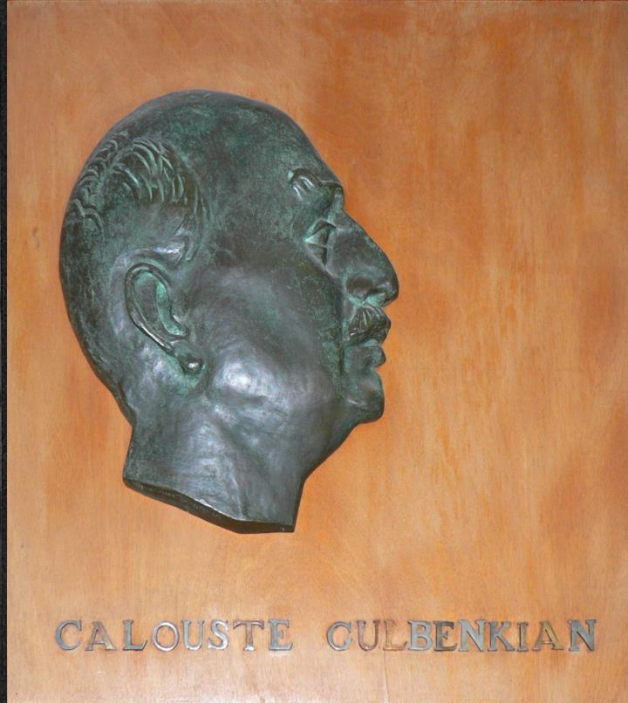
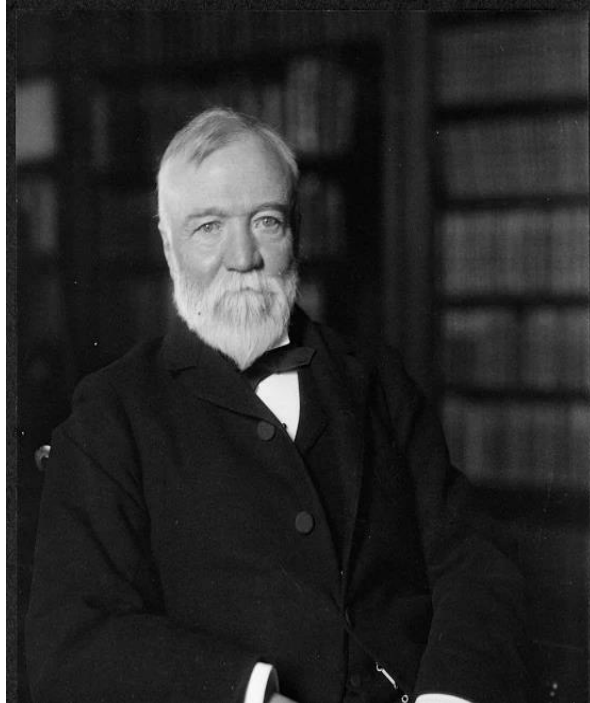


**Alfred Nobel**  
Stockholm  
1833-1896



# Donors for multiple purposes – with large endowments

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**Andrew Carnegie**  
New York, The Hague  
Dunfermline &c.  
1835-1919

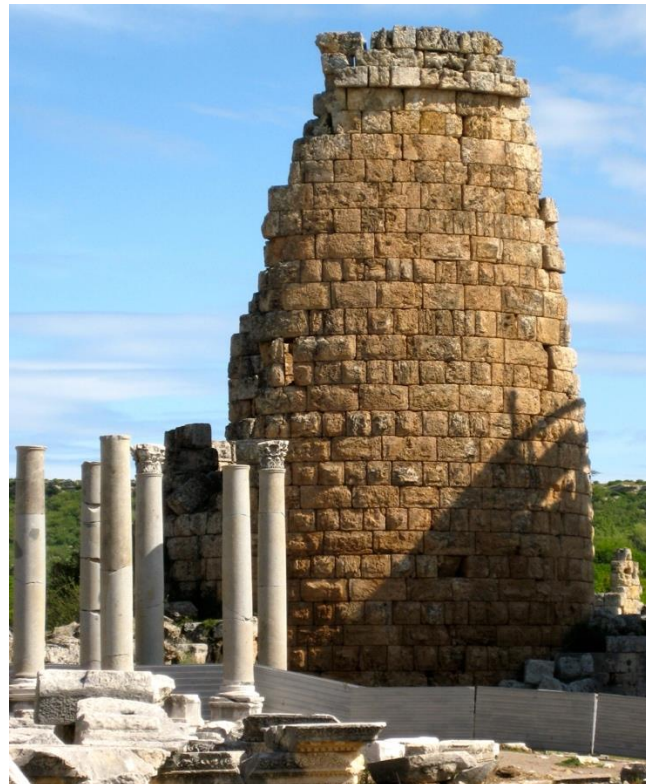
**Calouste Gulbenkian**  
Lisbon  
1869-1955

**John D. Rockefeller**  
New York  
1839-1937



## Female donors ???

very rare up to the late 20th century!

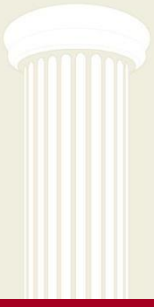


One example:  
**Plancia Magna**  
around AD 100

donated the city  
gate  
at Perge,  
Asia Minor,  
today Turkey



# Philanthropy in History



## Foundations have existed in all cultures in history

- ✓ Ancient West Asian and African
- ✓ Mediterranean
- ✓ European
- ✓ Chinese
- ✓ Indian
- ✓ Arabic
- ✓ etc.



## Foundations / philanthropic institutions have existed in China, in India, in Persia, in Mesopotamia, in Egypt for thousands of years.

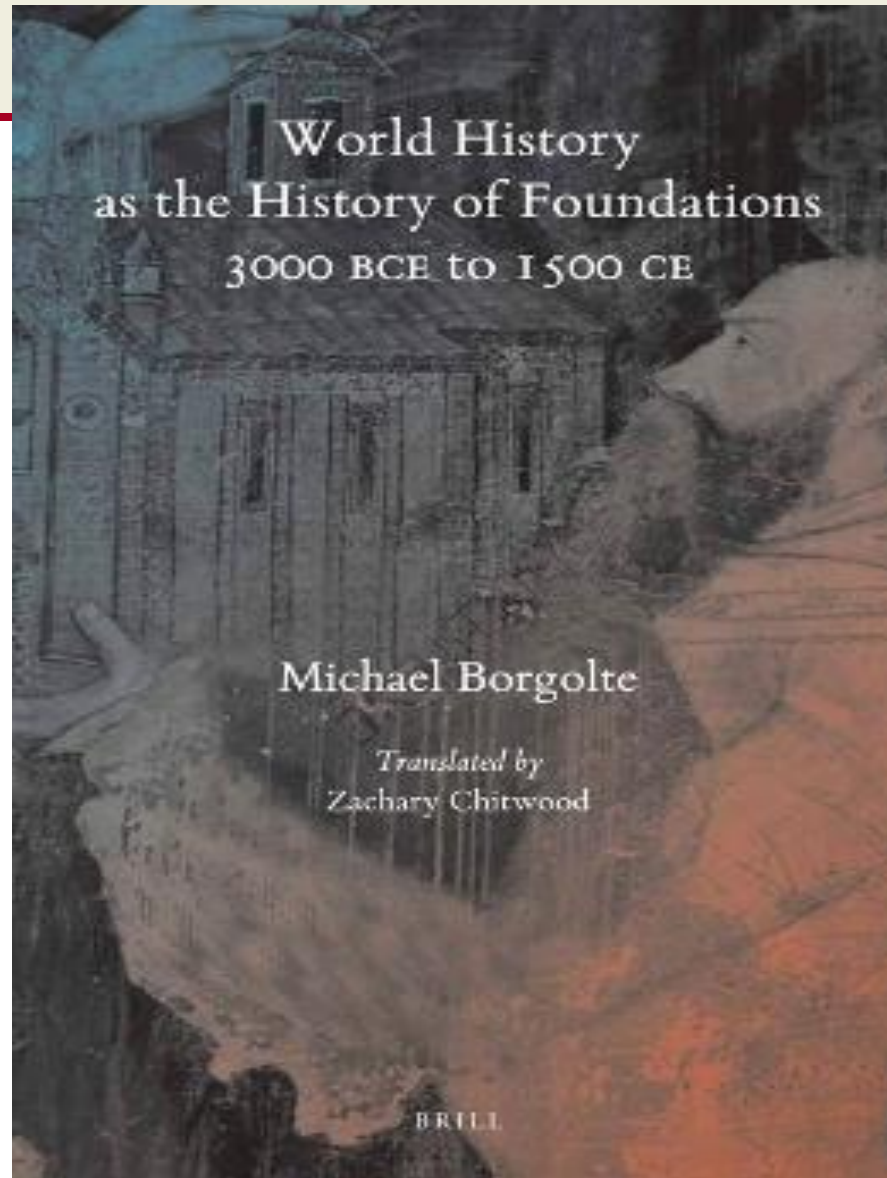
In China, the family of **Confucius** was endowed to preserve the grave of Confucius. **Mozi** (c. 470 BC – c. 391 BC) believed that the solution to the world's chaos was to replace selfishness with universal love, urging people to regard others' states and cities as their own.

Chinese foundations, also known as "ji jinhui" (基金会), are nonprofit legal entities that use donated property to achieve public welfare.



# The Research Base

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# The Research Base

Maecenata Schriften 5

## Die Stiftung – ein Paradox?

Zur Legitimität von Stiftungen in einer politischen Ordnung

Rupert Graf Stachwitz

*Mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Maecenata-Stiftung.*

LUCIUS  
"LUCIUS" 

MURAT ÇİZAKÇA

## A History of Philanthropic Foundations:

The Islamic World From the Seventh Century to the Present

BOGAZIÇI UNIVERSITY PRESS



A project:

- **A Cultural History of Philanthropy (6 volumes) to be published in 2027**



- The earliest foundations in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt
- Foundations in the Greek polis(...Platon...)
- Foundations in ancient Rome
- The Milan Constitution (313)
- Codex Justinianus (529) „piae causae“
- Foundation in Islam (Waqf / Awaqf)
- Foundations in the early Middle Ages



# The theatre in Leptis Magna: a foundation (2 B.C.)

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# Codex Justinianus

(part 1 of his Corpus Iuris Civilis)

The Emperor Justinian's  
compilation of Roman law  
AD 529

The basis of European (and  
North and Latin American) and  
Islamic foundation law



# Istanbul: A Waqf for a well

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# The temple mount in Jerusalem: a Waqf

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## General Awqaf Administration Dear Visitor,

You are welcome to visit the great Islamic Holy Sites.  
During your visit, please keep in mind the follow things :

- 1- For general security purposes, visitors must open all brief-cases, camera cases, and the like for physical inspection before they will be permitted to enter.
- 2- It is Prohibited to bring the following into the al-Aqsa plaza :  
Animals, Weapons , Alcoholic Beverages,  
Bicycles and Large Shoulder Cases
- 3- Intimate behavior such as kissing and embracing are strictly forbidden.





# Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia, Rome (AD 728)

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# The case of Oxford University

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- 1096: evidence of teaching
- 1214: recognition as a corporation
- 1249: first endowed houses (Merton College and Balliol College)
- Muslim tradition brought back from the crusades ??





# European Foundation History

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- Revival of foundations in towns from the 13th century
- Foundations attached to Churches, townships, and universities
- Changes at the time of the reformation, but for political, not for theological reasons
- A crisis of foundations in the 18th century
- A revival with the rise of bourgeoisie and romanticism



# Liebfrauenkirche (Cathedral), Munich, Germany a foundation (1271/1468)

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# Fuggerei: founded and operated by the Fugger Foundations, (1521)

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# Neuerkerode Foundation (1868) A Home for the Handicapped

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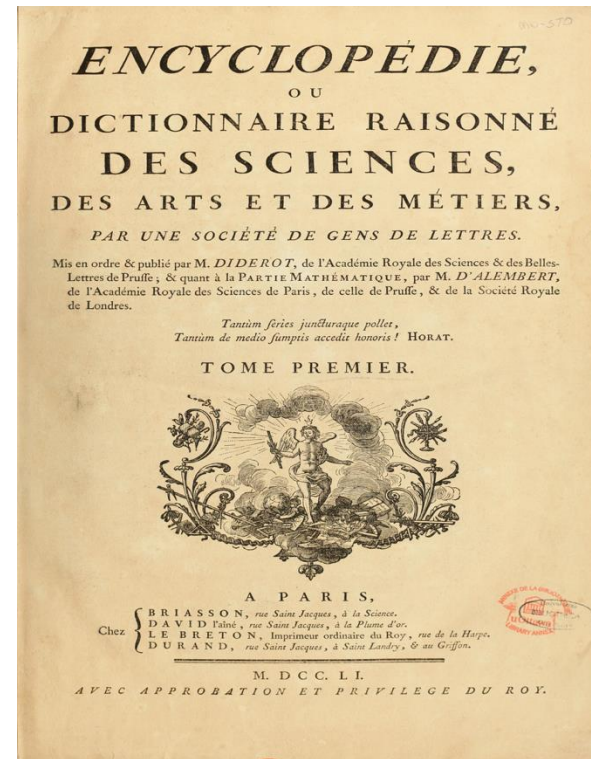
## The big philanthropy crisis in France

- 1749: King Louis XV. restricts philanthropic activities
- 1757: Anne Robert Jacques Turgot publishes the entry ‚*Fondations*‘ in the ‚*Encyclopédie*‘ - a harsh criticism of philanthropy. His recommendation: „*Il faut les détruire.*“
- 1791: Loi Le Chapelier: Foundations and Associations are deprived of their legal base.

**Why?** The state saw foundations, those affiliated to the Church in particular, as unwelcome competitors in the public domain – and was eager to cash in on their endowments.

- 1983: Foundations recover a legal base in France.

# Anne Robert Jacques Turgot



Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, French economist and politician, adherent to the physiocrat movement, Controller-General of Finances 1774-1776



# History of Foundations

- A crisis of foundations in Germany, due to
  - 1) the rise of the welfare state and
  - 2) to hyperinflation after WW I
- Foundations die due to loss of endowment
- Foundation: nice, but marginal in the 20th century
- Foundations in totalitarian states
  - Nazi Germany
  - East Germany



# Foundations in the 20th and 21st century

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- Foundations in the US from the late 19th century
- Enormous growth in numbers since WW II
- US-type philanthropy becomes a role model world-wide
- Mega foundations (Gates, Zuckerberg &c.) raise issues of compatibility and control.
- In Germany revival from the 1980s: over 50% of foundations are younger than 20
- **Philanthropy: a global phenomenon**



# A European and international perspective



# Ratings in comparison (number / conditions / activities)

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- Netherlands very good
- Switzerland very good
- United States very good, but...
- Muslim countries usually very good
- Scandinavia / Portugal few, but very large
- United Kingdom good
- Germany good
- Italy much improved
- China surprisingly good
- Austria poor
- France poor



- Most foundations have public purposes, are charitable – tax exempt – not for profit,
- but this is not necessarily so.
- Trusts, a specific type of foundations, are often not charitable.

## Charitable foundations:

- in Germany: approx. 95 %
- in Switzerland and the Netherlands: probably less
- in France: probably 100%
- in UK: probably 75%
- in Austria far less
- in the US: approx. 100%



# Is philanthropy going European or even global?

PROGRAMME TRANSNATIONAL GIVING

## YES !

- CSOs are involved in projects world-wide.
- CSOs need to or wish to fundraise world-wide.
- Donors wish to donate to beneficiaries outside their country of residence.
- Potential donors ask about tax-deduction.
- The EU is interested in pan-European philanthropy.
- A European umbrella organisation for foundations has existed since 1989 (was European Foundation Centre, is now PHILEA).



## An example for a European foundation project

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# Transnational Giving

A European civil society network operated by foundations

<https://www.transnationalgiving.eu/>



# The Transnational Giving Europe Network

PROGRAMME TRANSNATIONAL GIVING



EUROPSKA  
ZAKLADA ZA  
FILANTROPIJU  
I DRUSTVENI  
RAZVOJ



Kárpátok Alapítvány



SWISS PHILANTHROPY  
Foundation



FUND 05  
FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL AND  
IMPACT INVESTMENT



Fondazione  
Donor  
Italia



Avatud Eesti Fond  
Open Estonia Foundation



The Community  
Foundation for Ireland



FONDATION  
DE LUXEMBOURG

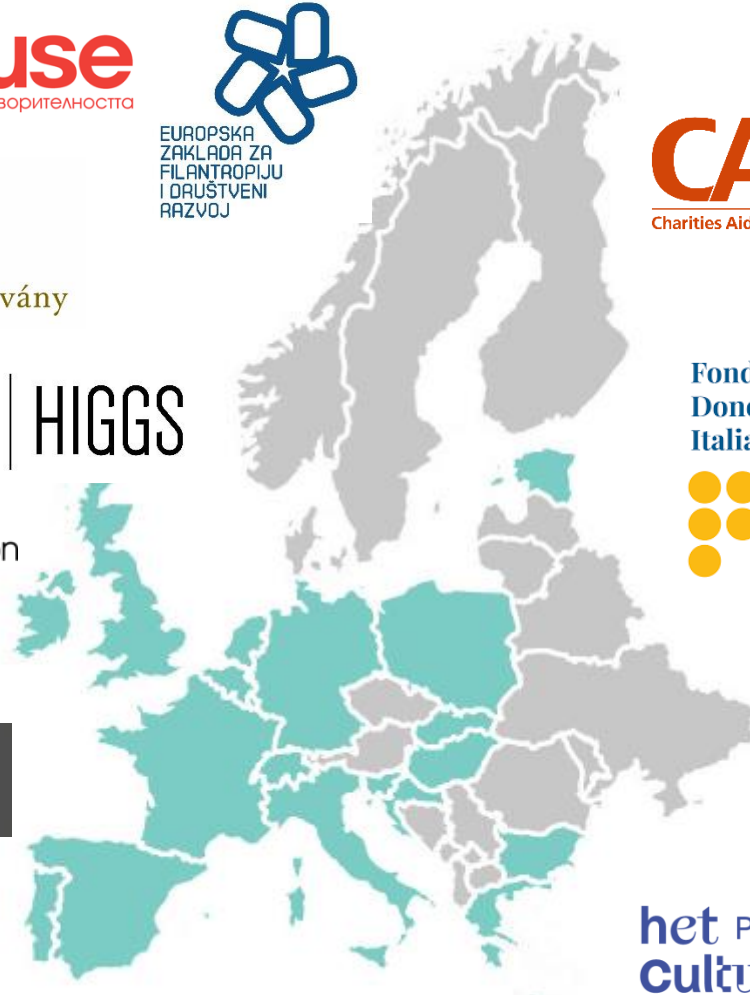
Philanthropy in action



FUNDAÇÃO  
ORIENTE

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het Prins Bernhard  
cultuurfonds

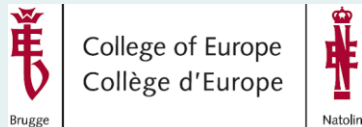
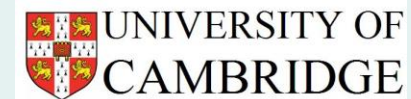


# Some registered beneficiaries...

PROGRAMME TRANSNATIONAL GIVING



BAYERISCHE  
STAATSOOPER

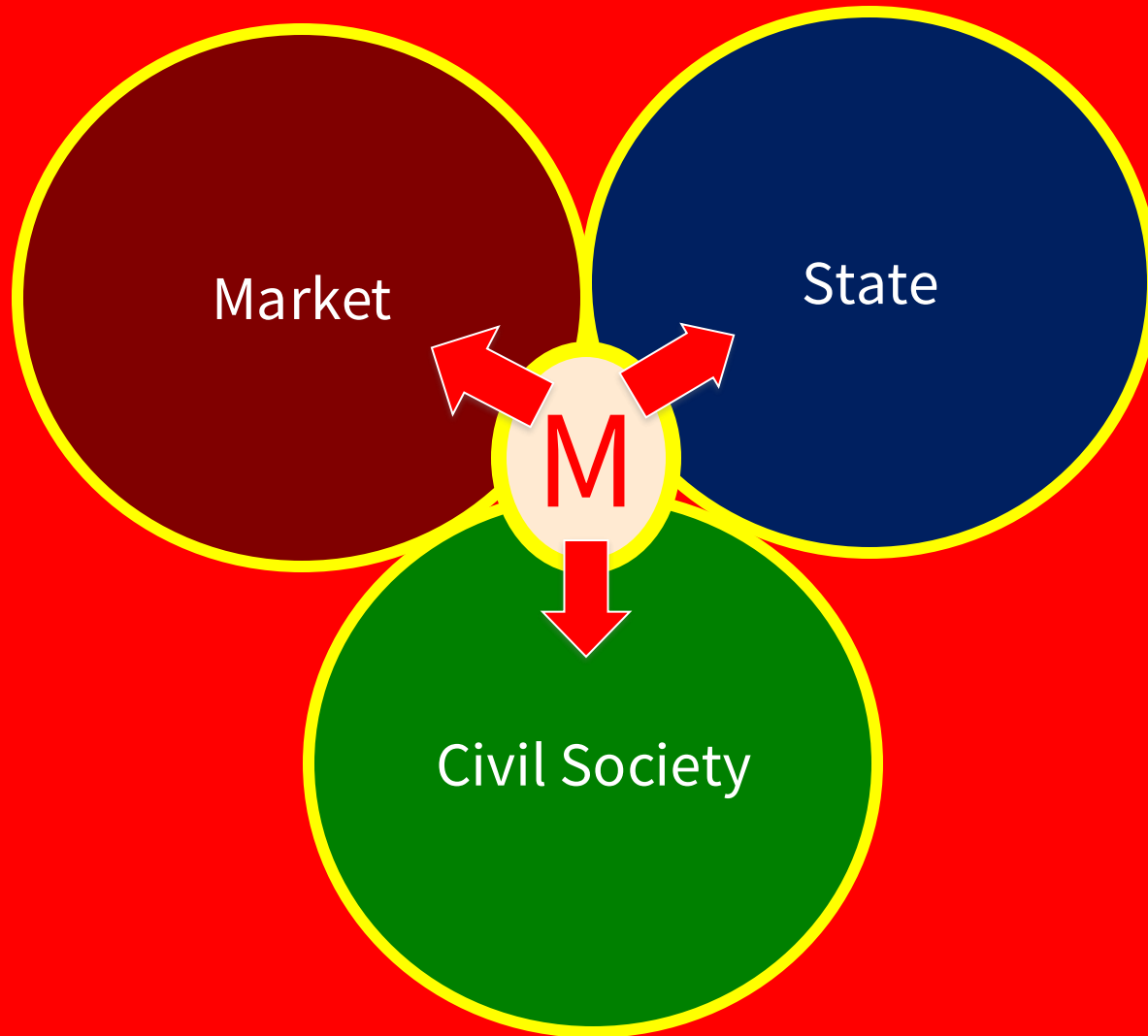




# Foundations in modern society



# The public sphere





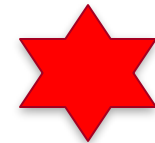
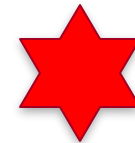
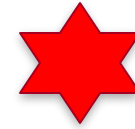
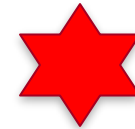
# Functions of civil society



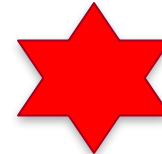
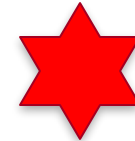
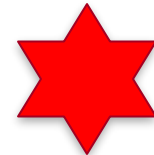
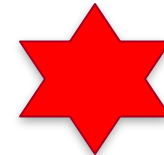


# Foundations in civil society

- Watchdogs
- Advocacy
- Service providers
- Self help
- Intermediaries
- Community building
- Deliberative democracy



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- Foundations don't fit with a democracy.
  - Robert Reich and others (Stanford University)
- Donors should rather pay more taxes.
  - Marlene Engelhorn: *taxmenow*
- Foundations are a sign of social inequality.
- Foundations have too much power.
  - Tim Schwab: *The Bill Gates Problem*
- Foundations have no licence to operate.



# Legitimacy / Licence to operate

## Pro:

- Rule of law / protection of the existing
- Right of expression of personality
- Sustainability
- Acceptance
- Usefulness



## Con:

- Rule of the dead hand
- Purposes become obsolete
- Not compatible with democracy
- Undue concentration of power
- Perpetuating social inequality



# New forms of philanthropy

Donors are looking for alternatives to traditional instruments of philanthropy:

- structured donor programmes
- social investments
- social entrepreneurship
- venture philanthropy
- philanthropic family offices
- **&c.**