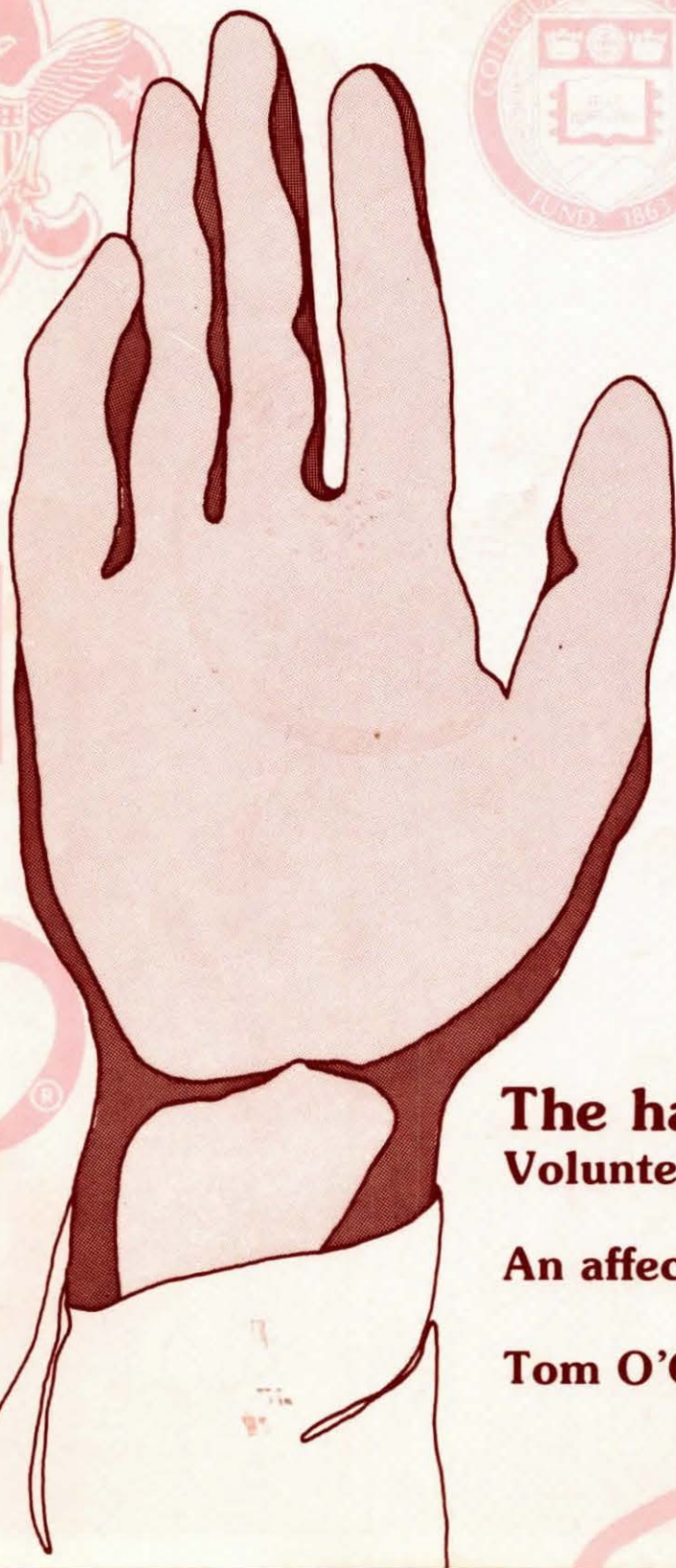


# Boston College Magazine

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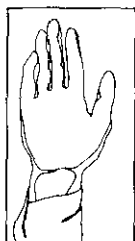
**The hand that gives, gathers  
Volunteers and voluntarism**

**An affectionate look at 'lost words'**

**Tom O'Connell on library**

# Boston College Magazine

Volume XLI, Number 1



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John Giuggio/Helen Landreth/Thomas P. O'Malley, S. J./Patricia Strahle

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## The freely given

There is little doubt that throughout western civilization voluntarism has been one of the most influential forces in shaping our culture and society. Because we can sometimes forget the importance of voluntarism to our way of life, I have been pleased to see renewed public interest and the increased media attention to the topic in recent months. For the same reason, I am happy to introduce this timely subject to the readers of *Boston College Magazine*.

It would be accurate to say that, like every Jesuit, I have spent all my adult life in voluntarism, but I am not apt to think of my life in that context. In fairness, I must begin by admitting that I am not enamored of the word "volunteer" to describe certain kinds of activities because of some of its connotation — that of the "amateur," for example. Therefore, the key to my point of view in developing my reflections on this subject shall be the answer to the question "Volunteer as opposed to what?"

We usually talk about the voluntary in reference to what is deliberately chosen and freely done, as opposed to the forced or the required. I prefer the meaning contained in the French word *gratuit*, which describes the freely given, the unconstrained and unobligatory, that which seeks no recompense. Unfortunately, the English "gratuitous" suggests the arbitrary, which is the exact opposite of the high motivation of acts that are voluntary.

Voluntarism is the vehicle for idealism in our society and for altruism. Most in-

stitutions in the non-profit sector are founded on ideals and develop strength as people rally on behalf of those ideals.

There is, though, a counter-thrust in institutions like these. Much of their vitality comes from the idealism that led to their creation, but they are so specialized and so humanly important that they require the best of professional competence and expertise to insure their proper functioning. Consequently, universities and hospitals need, along with their idealism, the best professionalism and competence for which they can pay and compete. It is within these two thrusts that an institution like Boston College operates.

I believe we are entering a period when the idealistic character and goals of institutions like Boston College are reasserting themselves. The motivation to volunteer one's services is vigorously at work and forceful again. There is a quality of dedication, of service, of involvement that just cannot be paid for. That quality is something we have at Boston College in both the pure volunteers and the people who have made their professional careers here.

It is paradoxical, perhaps, but not really surprising that the voluntarism is sometimes most clearly present in the professionals at the University, since it is often one of the major motivations that has them doing what they are doing as professionals. On the other hand, the best of voluntarism has developed its own professionalism in recent years, and we no longer have a situation of the profession-

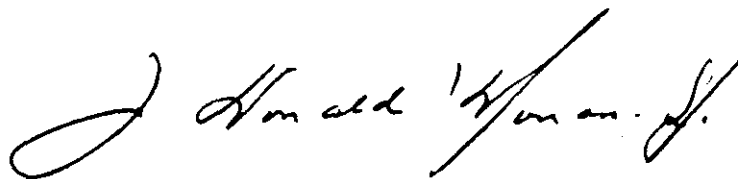
als "in here" and the volunteers "out there."

There is in all of this something of what the philosopher Marcel would have regarded as "the mystery of the human." One can probably never pursue unmitigated self-interest, just as one can probably never achieve pure altruism. Altruism at its best is the highest self-fulfillment that can be pursued. This applies to professionalism, too. Professionalism is most effective in service to an ideal, and an ideal is effectively pursued only when it is pursued professionally, with competence and understanding.

In these terms, the religious life can be something of a paradigm of voluntarism, particularly the religious life dedicated to professional tasks or the carrying out of religious motivation through professional channels.

The difference between sincerity and competence is a theme that ran throughout my ethics course. Both are necessary because one without the other can be destructive. But when idealism and good will accompany exceptional competence, greatness can be, and often is, the result.

This union of competence and idealism comes very close, I believe, to expressing the true value of a Boston College education. It is the greatest contribution the University can make to society through our alumni. It is also the basis for my belief that people are the greatest asset of Boston College, a belief eloquently supported by the sampling of people and programs presented in the following pages.



President

# The impact of the voluntary sector on society

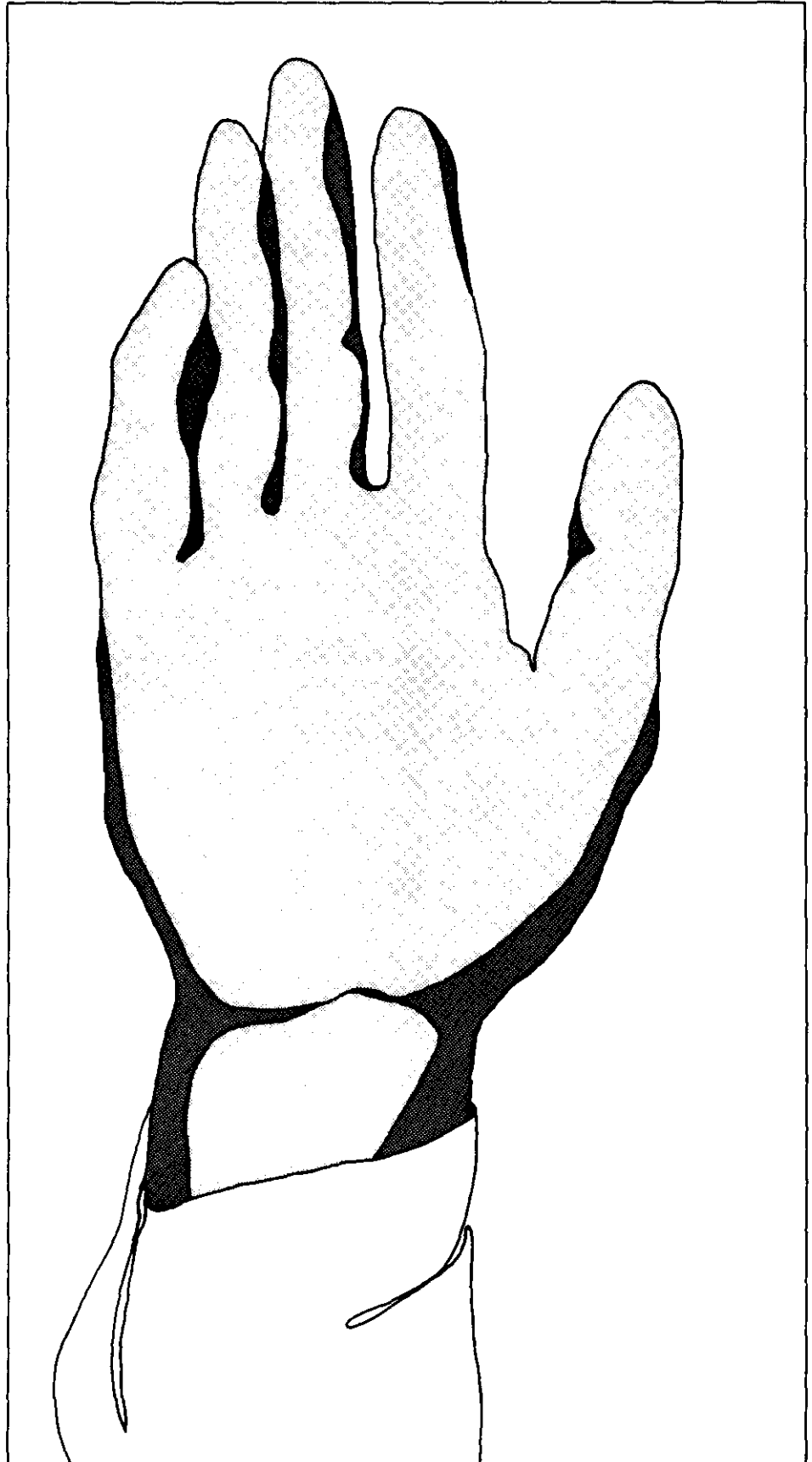
by David H. Smith

The "voluntary sector" of society refers to all those persons, groups, roles, organizations and institutions in society whose goals involve primarily voluntary action. The term "voluntary action," roughly speaking, includes what one is neither made nor paid to do, but rather what one does out of some kind of expectation of psychic benefits or commitment to some value, ideal or common interest.

One could delineate the voluntary sector in a negative way by contrasting it with the commercial or business sector (sometimes called the "private sector") and with the government or public sector. Another way of describing the voluntary sector is by saying that it is the total persisting social embodiment (in the form of norms, expectations, customs and ways of behaving) of voluntary action in society.

Our question here is, simply, what impact does the voluntary sector as a whole have on society. There is not sufficient research information to permit one to do an aggregate analysis, building up a picture of the whole by systematically combining the parts. Instead, we can provide a brief analysis, with more interest in suggesting some lines of possible future research and theory than in being exhaustive or thorough.

Another way of looking at what we are calling the impacts of the voluntary sector is to see the processes behind these impacts and to term them the "functions" or "roles" of the voluntary sector. This article is an attempt to help delineate more clearly why there is a voluntary sector in society, much as one might elsewhere discuss the role of government institutions or business or even the family in society. Like all of the latter, of course, the role of the voluntary sector changes over time in a given society and even in human society as a whole. The impacts discussed below are suggested as very general aspects of the voluntary sector in human society and hence they are present to at least some degree as long as there is a voluntary sector.



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*David H. Smith is Professor of Sociology at the University.*

**One of the most central impacts of the voluntary sector is to provide society with a large variety of partially tested social innovations, from which business, government and other institutions can select and institutionalize those innovations that seem most promising.** The independent voluntary sector is thus the prototyping test bed of many, perhaps most new social forms and modes of human relations. Where business and government, science and technology are active in the creation and testing of technological innovations, the independent voluntary sector specializes in the practical testing of social ideas. Nearly every function currently performed by governments at various levels was once a new social idea and the experiment of some voluntary group, formal or informal — this is true of education, welfare, care for the aged, building roads, even fighting wars (volunteer citizen militias).

**Nearly every function currently performed by government at various levels was once a new social idea and the experiment of some voluntary group.**

In sum, the voluntary sector has tended to provide the social risk capital of human society. It has been sufficiently free of the kinds of constraints that bind business (the constant need to show a profit) and government (the need to maintain control and, in societies with effective democracies, the need to act in accord with a broad consensus) so that its component elements (particular voluntary groups or even individuals) can act simply out of commitment to some value or idea, without needing to wait until the payoffs for that kind of activity can be justified in terms appropriate to mobilizing economic or governmental institutions. It is thus the most "error-embracing" and experimental component of society.

**Another central impact of the voluntary sector on society has been the provision of countervailing definitions of reality and morality** — ideologies, perspectives and worldviews that frequently challenge the prevailing assumptions about what exists and what is good and what should be done in society. The voluntary sector is that part of society that, collectively, is most likely to say that "the

emperor has no clothes." Voluntary groups of various kinds are distinctive among human groups in the extent to which they develop their own ideologies and value systems. If these definitions of reality and morality are sufficiently compelling to people, voluntary groups grow into huge social movements and can change the course of history, both within a given nation (e.g., the abolitionist movement in the early and middle 19th century of the United States) and across human society as a whole (e.g., Christianity, Buddhism, democracy, communism).

This kind of impact of the voluntary sector is related to the previous one, but where the former kind of impact emphasized experimentation with social innovation in practice, the present impact emphasizes instead ideological and moral innovation. Where the previous point focused on the social risk capital role of the

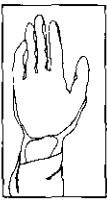
voluntary sector in society, the present point focuses on the role of the voluntary sector as a gadfly, dreamer, and moral leader in society. Voluntary groups of various kinds are concerned with the generation and allocation of human commitment in the deepest sense. In the process of doing this, the voluntary sector as a whole provides moral and ideological leadership to the majority of human society, and often calls into question the existing legitimacy structures and accepted social definitions of reality of particular societies.

**The voluntary sector of society provides the play element in society, especially as the search for novelty, beauty, recreation and fun for their own sake may be collectively organized.** Again because the voluntary sector is not constrained generally by such values as profit, control and broad social consensus, voluntary groups can form in terms of literally thousands of different kinds of common interests. A full array of common interest groups (especially expressive rather than instrumental ones) in an elaborated but still evolving voluntary sector permits (in principle) nearly all in-

dividuals to find at least one group that will be satisfying to them. If there is no such group, one or more individuals may form one, if they wish, to reflect their own needs and vision of the play element. Such a group may be formal or informal, large or small, permanent or transient, open or closed, and so forth.

To speak of the play element here is not to speak of something trivial and unimportant. As society becomes increasingly complex and work activity is increasingly structured in terms of large bureaucracies, people's unsatisfied needs for play, novelty, new experience and all manner of recreation tend to increase. The kind of easy interchange and blending of play and work that could be present in more traditional economies tends to be lost. Under such circumstances, voluntary groups often provide a window of variety and intrinsic satisfaction in an otherwise rather boring or at last psychologically fatiguing world of work and responsibility.

**The voluntary sector also has a major impact on the level of social integration in society.** Partly through directly expressive groups, whose aims are explicitly to provide fellowship, sociability and mutual companionship, and partly through the sociability aspects of all other kinds of collective and interpersonal forms of voluntary action, the voluntary sector helps in a very basic way to satisfy some of the human needs for affiliation, approval, and so on. In advanced industrial and urbanized societies, where the family and kinship as well as the local community and neighborhood play a markedly reduced role in providing social integration, affiliations based on common interests can become very important to the individual. Indeed, without the latter kind of voluntary sector-based common interest affiliations, the resulting rates of individual social isolation in society would lead to even more anomie, alienation and a variety of attendant social and psychological problems than are now the case. Obviously, the voluntary sector has not been the whole solution to the root problem of social isolation in modern society, yet voluntary groups do play a demonstrable and important part in the solution. And with the feeling of being accepted as a person that the voluntary sector provides (or can provide) to a significant proportion of the population in



## Volunteers and voluntarism

modern societies goes the correlative provision of positive affect, a major component of human happiness and the quality of human life.

Another aspect of the role of the voluntary sector in providing social integration is the social adjustment "buffering" function that many kinds of voluntary groups provide. When numerous individuals of a certain social and cultural background are for some reason uprooted from their customary societal niches, new voluntary groups frequently emerge to provide these individuals with an insulated or "buffered" special environment for part of their time. Typical examples would be the numerous immigrant associations that sprang up in the United States as a result of successive waves of immigration from various countries or the kinship oriented voluntary associations that emerged to ease the adjustment of rural West Africans to life in larger cities.

These kinds of social adjustment oriented voluntary groups do not, however, emerge only in the case of physical/geographical changes on a large scale. The voluntary sector also provides a social adjustment "mechanism" to ease the shocks of social dislocations and rapid social changes of all sorts. The voluntary group involved may cater to a former elite that has been disenfranchised or deprived of its former holdings (e.g., the association of maharajahs of India, which arose to fight for "maharajah's rights" when the Indian Congress stripped them of their traditional privileges and land, substituting a moderate annual stipend). Or the voluntary groups involved may represent a deprived category of persons who are attempting to adjust to changed social conditions that are more conducive to their sharing equitably in the good life as lived in their society (e.g., the early labor unions or black power groups, striving for recognition of their right to exist and to fight for the betterment of the conditions of their constituencies).

On another level, the voluntary sector plays an important integrative role by linking together individuals, groups, institutions and even nations that otherwise would be in greater conflict, or at least competition with each other. At the community level, a variety of voluntary associations will each tend to have as members a set of two or more individuals representing differing and often oppos-

ing political, religious, cultural, or social perspectives and backgrounds. The co-participation of this set of individuals in the same voluntary association can have significant moderating effects on the relationships among these individuals. Similar integrative effects can be found at national levels where several groups from different parts of the country and/or different social and cultural perspectives participate together in a common federation or other national voluntary organization. And at the international level, the joint participation of voluntary groups from otherwise conflicting nations in some transnational federative organization may well have important long range effects on the relations between the countries involved and on the possibilities of peace in the world.

**In addition to providing a wide variety of new ideas about social behavior as described earlier, the voluntary sector also is active in preserving numerous old ideas.** Voluntary action and voluntary organizations have played a major role in history in preserving values, ways of life, ideas, beliefs, artifacts, and other productions of the mind, heart and hand of man from earlier times so that this great variety of human culture is not lost to future generations. For example, there are in the United States numerous local historical societies that specialize in preserving the history of particular towns and areas. There are nonprofit voluntary organizations that run local museums, libraries, and historical sites. And there are a number of voluntary organizations whose primary function it is to preserve the values of cultures or subcultures that no longer have any substantial power or importance in American society, but that nevertheless represent a way of life of significant numbers of people at some period in history or somewhere around the world (e.g., American Indian groups, in some instances, or immigrant ethnic associations that persist long after the ethnic group involved has been thoroughly assimilated into American culture). The role of municipal, state and national governments in supporting museums and historical sites grows from the roots of earlier non-profit, non-governmental support of such "islands of culture."

Another aspect of the belief/value preservation role of the voluntary sector involves voluntary associations as educational experiences, especially where these associations are attempting to pass on to their members or to the public at large some body of beliefs and values originating in the past. In part this would include many of the activities of most religious sects and denominations, especially insofar as one focuses upon their socialization and indoctrination activities (e.g., catechism classes, "Sunday schools," Hebrew day schools, etc.). In part this function also includes all manner of more strictly educational voluntary organizations, from Plato's Academy to modern Great Books Discussion Groups and so-called "Free Universities."

The various levels of government in the contemporary world have largely taken over the task of education on a broad scale, yet voluntary organizations still are active in supplementing government-run educational systems by filling in the gaps and by prodding these systems to improve or take on responsibility for the preservation of additional knowledge or values. For instance, voluntary civil rights and black liberation organizations have taken the lead in educating both blacks and whites in the United States regarding black history and accomplishments. Gradually, under the pressure of such voluntary associations in the past several years, the public educational system in the United States has been changing to accommodate a more accurate and complete picture of black history, although the process is by no means finished yet. Similar examples could be given with regard to other content areas as well (e.g., women's history, American Indian history, etc.)

**The voluntary sector also embodies and represents in society the sense of mystery, wonder and the sacred.** Neither the business nor government sectors in modern society has much tendency to be concerned with such matters. Many would say that religion today is very much a big business: and both business and government support science in a substantial way. Yet precisely in those areas where religion and science almost meet, where the borders of religion are receding under the pressure of an ever-

expanding science, the business and government sectors are often *least* involved. Voluntary associations and non-profit foundations/research organizations are the only groups experimenting seriously with new forms of worship, non-drug induced "consciousness expansion" and the "religious experience," the occult investigation of flying saucers, extra-sensory perception, etc.

The "heretics" of both science and religion are seldom supported in their work directly and consciously by the business or government sectors. Only through

boxes have generally been the economic and governmental systems, although other major institutions of society have played a role as well (e.g., education, the family, religion, etc.)

Voluntary associations and groups, on the other hand, have long been a primary means of at least partially escaping these barriers and boxes. Through participation in voluntary action a wide variety of people have been able to find or to create special social groups that would permit them to grow as individuals. This kind of personal growth has many relevant as-

pects and discrimination of the dominant white, male, Anglo-Saxon Protestants in our society. However, this situation is not unique to the United States. There are similar and even different forms of prejudice and discrimination in *all* other societies, varying only in degree and the particular social groups singled out for attention. And in all societies voluntary associations also offer the disadvantaged some chance of enhanced self-development, though these associations must sometimes meet in secret underground groups if the society in which they are operating is oppressive and does not respect the right of free association.

Voluntary action potentially offers unique opportunities for personal growth and realization of personal potentials not only for those people whom society otherwise deprives, but also for *all* the members of society in certain directions. No matter how free, open, egalitarian and highly developed the society, there are always limitations of some sort placed on the development of each person by his particular social environment. Any major decision to follow a certain line of personal occupational or educational development, for instance, automatically forecloses a number of other alternatives, or at least makes them highly unlikely. Voluntary associations, however, exist (or can exist) in such profusion and variety that they can provide otherwise missed personal development opportunities to almost any person at almost any stage of life. This is as true for the school teacher who always wanted to learn to fly (and who can join a flying club to do so even at age 60), as it is for the airline pilot who always wanted to write novels (and who can join a writers' club to work toward this end).

Of course, not every person will find the appropriate voluntary association for his or her personal growth needs to be available at the time it is needed. But the voluntary sector as a whole, nevertheless, still serves in some significant degree this general role of providing substantial numbers of individuals in society with otherwise unavailable opportunities for self-actualization and self-fulfillment.

**The voluntary sector, in an especially important impact related directly to the first two impacts discussed earlier, is a source of "negative feedback" for society**

**Voluntary action is the principal manner in which a sense of the sacred, the mysterious and the weird can be preserved in our otherwise hyper-rational contemporary society.**

voluntary action and the support of the voluntary sector have the major changes in man's view of the supernatural and its relation to the natural tended to come about in the past. The same has also been true, by and large, for major changes in man's view of himself and of the natural universe in the past. The dominant economic and political (and religious) systems of any given epoch are seldom very receptive to the really new visions of either the natural or supernatural world (e.g., Galileo and Copernicus; Jesus). Voluntary action is thus the principal manner in which a sense of the sacred, the mysterious, and the weird can be preserved and permitted some measure of expression in our otherwise hyper-rational contemporary society.

**The voluntary sector also has the ability to liberate the individual and permit him or her the fullest possible measure of expression of personal capacities and potentialities within an otherwise constraining social environment.** All societies have their systems of laws, customs, roles and organizations that box people in and limit their opportunities for personal expression and personal development. The full extent of societal limitations on people have just begun to be realized in recent decades, spurred in part by the "liberation" movements of women, blacks, the poor, the "Third World" and other disadvantaged or disenfranchised groups. The primary embodiments of these societal barriers and

pects, but can be summed up generally as "self-actualization," to use a term from American psychologist Abraham Maslow. For some this means intellectual developments, the process of becoming increasingly analytical, informed and self-conscious about the nature of one's life situation and problems. When this occurs for a whole category or group of people, the process is often referred to as "group conscientization" or "consciousness raising" (e.g., among blacks, women, the poor). Seldom does such special personal growth occur on a broad scale outside voluntary groups and movements.

For others, self-actualization through voluntary action takes the form of developing otherwise unused capacities, talents, skills or potentials of a more active and practical sort. For many kinds of people, depending on the stage of social, economic and political development of a society, voluntary associations and voluntary action offer the only feasible opportunity for leadership, for learning to speak in public, for practicing the fine art of management, for exercising analytical judgment, etc. Until very recently in American society, for instance, neither blacks nor women nor the members of certain other disadvantaged groups could hope to develop fully their capacities through the occupational system of the economic or government sectors. Only in voluntary groups of their own making could they seek any kind of fulfillment and self expression, bound as they were (and in part continue to be) by the preju-



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as a whole, especially with regard to the directions taken by the major institutions of society such as government and business. Without "negative feedback," any system is dangerously vulnerable to destroying itself through excesses in one direction or another. Thus, however uncomfortable and irritating they may be at times, voluntary associations and the voluntary sector are absolutely vital to the continuing development of society.

**However uncomfortable and irritating they may be at times, voluntary associations and the voluntary sector are absolutely vital to the continuing development of society.**

This systemic corrective role of the voluntary sector is, of course, not carried out by all voluntary associations, any more than all voluntary associations are concerned with the play element, value preservation or the sacred. Yet the small cutting edge of the voluntary sector that does perform the role of social critic is extremely important, usually bearing the responsibility for the continued existence and future growth of the rest of the voluntary sector. In societies where a sufficient number and variety of voluntary groups are unable to play effectively their roles as social critics, the dominant governmental and economic institutions may well take over and suppress the entire voluntary sector.

In the contemporary United States there are numerous examples of voluntary associations and groups playing this systemic corrective role. All of the cause-oriented, advocacy and issue-oriented groups tend to fall into this category, from the environmental movement to the civil rights movement and women's liberation. The tactics and strategy of such groups cover a broad range from rather traditional lobbying, through demonstrations and "be-ins," to direct remedial action such as "ecotage" (sabotage of notable corporate polluters and other "environmental undesirables").

Some of the more imaginative and innovative approaches have been developed in an attempt to modify the business sector, rather than focusing solely on the government sector. For instance, there have been in-depth investigations by Ralph Nader and his associates of particular companies' practices and their re-

First National City Bank of New York and relationship to the public interest (e.g., for DuPont), counter-management stockholder activity in the public interest (e.g., Project G.M.), dissenting annual reports written to present a full public accounting of a corporation's activities harmful to the general public interest and welfare, class action suits brought by voluntary groups against manufacturers and developers, etc.

When looked at in the particular, such activities (which vary markedly in their success) often seem fruitless and doomed to failure, given the power of the organizations and systems being challenged. Yet when we see these activities of voluntary groups in a larger context, when we sum up these numerous activities attempting to modify and improve the dominant systems and organizations of our society, they take on a very important general meaning. Even if many or most of such system correction attempts by voluntary groups should fail, the continual and expanding pressure being brought to bear by the voluntary sector on the central institutions of society is still likely to have a salutary long-term modifying influence. When the leaders of the business and governmental sectors know that "someone is watching," that they will eventually have to account to the public interest for their actions, this awareness encourages greater attention to the public interest rather than merely to narrow, private interests.

When for one reason or another the voluntary sector is not able to operate effectively as a systemic corrective (either because of its own inadequacies or the failure of the leaders of dominant institutions to listen and change accordingly), the usual result in human history has been a broad social revolution (not just a palace revolution or simple coup). When the dominant institutions of any society have ignored for too long or too often the voices of the public interest as expressed by elements of the voluntary sector, revolutionary and usually underground voluntary groups arise and make concrete

plans to overthrow the existing system completely. The American, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban and other revolutions all attest to this pattern.

Thus, when the voluntary sector cannot make itself heard adequately through the permissible communication and influence channels in a society, certain voluntary groups and movements tend to arise to revamp the whole system, establishing whole new institutional arrangements with their corresponding new channels of influence and communication. Not surprisingly, these channels generally favor those kinds of persons and groups who were unable to be heard previously (although the kinds of people formerly dominant often end up in as bad a position or worse than that faced by the formerly disadvantaged prior to the revolution). This cycle will tend to repeat itself until a society reaches a point where it is effectively and continuously self-correcting, through the activities of a strong and social change-oriented voluntary sector, and where its major institutions are basically operating primarily in the public interest of all of its citizens (not just its white, male, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, or their equivalents in some other societies than the United States and the British Commonwealth).

**The voluntary sector gives support specifically to the economic system of a society, especially a modern industrial society.** Voluntary associations of many kinds provide crucial kinds of social, intellectual and technical linkages among workers in numerous occupations: professional associations increase the effectiveness of most kinds of scientists, engineers, technicians, etc., just as manufacturers and trade associations support the growth of whole industries. And various kinds of labor unions play their part as well although many businessmen would question the degree to which they "support" the economic system. But labor unions only seem non-supportive of the economic system when the latter is viewed narrowly from the point of view of an employer interested solely in profit maximization. Labor unions ultimately have to be deeply concerned with the viability of the economic system and the productivity of their own members if they are to survive.



This economic support role of the voluntary sector is usually lost sight of because so many people tend to view all kinds of economic self-interest and occupationally related voluntary associations as integral parts of the business sector. In fact, these kinds of voluntary organizations are quite distinct from the business sector itself, however close their relationship might be to business corporations and occupational activities. The primary purpose of business corporations is to make a profit for their owners, whether they are actually involved in running the corporation or not. On the other hand, economic self-interest voluntary associations have as their primary purpose the enhancement of the long-term occupational and economic interests of their member-participants. While corporation employees and professionals are paid in salaries, wages or fees for their participation, the members of economic self-interest voluntary associations themselves pay for the privilege of belonging to and benefiting from these associations.

**The voluntary sector constitutes an important latent resource for all kinds of goal attainment in the interests of the society as a whole.** Put another way, the voluntary sector represents a tremendous reservoir of potential energy that can be mobilized under appropriate circumstances for broad societal goals. The role of the voluntary sector in revolutionary situations is but one example of this latent potential. The activity of voluntary association networks in more limited disaster situations is a more common example. The voluntary sector and its component associations, groups and channels of communication and influence make possible the mobilization of large numbers of people on relatively short notice for special purposes (usually in the common interest) without resorting to economic rewards or legal coercion as activating forces. Such a latent potential in the voluntary sector is especially important when neither economic nor political-legal forces can feasibly be brought to bear to resolve some widespread problem situation.

The latent potential of the voluntary sector can be viewed in another way as well. Voluntarism is based on a *charitable grants economy* (donations of time, money, etc.) as contrasted with the *coercive grants*

*economy* (taxation) on which the government sector operates or the *market economy* on which the business sector operates. Both of the latter types of economy work well for certain kinds of purposes, but neither works well for the accomplishment of *all* kinds of purposes in society. In the same way, there are many kinds of purposes and activities for which the charitable grants economy tends to work best.

**With the right spark, the course of history can be changed in the brief, rare periods of almost total societal mobilization through the leadership of the voluntary sector.**

Now the important latent potential of the voluntary sector is that, under appropriately compelling circumstances (i.e., for the "right" value, goal or ideal), the money, goods, real property and services mobilized by the voluntary sector through the charitable grants economy can completely overwhelm all considerations of the coercive grants economy and the market economy. For certain goals and ideals, a large majority of society can be induced to "give their all" and to do so gladly, willingly and voluntarily. This does not occur very often, to be sure, nor does it last very long. But the latent potential is there in any society at any time. With the right spark — usually a charismatic leader with an idea and an ideal — the course of history can be changed in these brief, rare periods of almost total societal mobilization through the leadership of the voluntary sector.

As with any form of human group or activity, voluntary action and the voluntary sector are by no means always positive in their impacts. For every one of the impacts we have noted, there can be negative consequences in certain circumstances and with regard to certain values. Thus, when voluntary associations experiment with new social forms, the failures can often be harmful to specific people and organizations. When alternative definitions of reality and morality are offered, these can be evil, as in the case of Nazi Germany and its ideology as generated by the Nazi party, a voluntary association. When voluntary groups focus on the play element, their fun can become mischievous, as in the case of a boys'

gang that wrecks a school "just for kicks." When social clubs provide a warm and close sense of belonging to their members, they can also create deep dissatisfaction in people who would dearly like to belong but are excluded from a particular club or kind of club.

In the same way, voluntary groups striving to preserve some beliefs or values from the past may be hold onto anachronisms that would be better left to the

pages of history books. Clubs whose members chase around seeking flying saucers and little green men from Mars might more profitably spend their time and energy elsewhere with more satisfying results. Organizations that arouse the full potentials of black people — who must then go out into the real world and face a harsh reality of bigotry and discrimination — may or may not be doing them a favor. The kinds of systemic corrections being suggested by cause-oriented and advocacy groups may not be conducive to the greatest good of the greatest number. Economic self-interest voluntary groups often tend to ignore the public interest in favor of an exclusive and selfish private interest. And the latent potentials of the voluntary sector can be mobilized to do evil as well as to do good for one's fellow man.

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