ELEVEN

From Political Economy to Civil Society: Arthur W. Page, Corporate Philanthropy, and the Reframing of the Past in Post–New Deal America

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Of the many factors shaping the boundaries of state and society in the United States, few are more elusive than corporate philanthropy.[1] In subtle and sometimes paradoxical ways, corporate philanthropy has influenced not only the making of public policy but also the framing of credible generalizations about the role of governmental institutions in the American past. Many business leaders resented the regulatory legislation that was a defining feature of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and deplored the enthusiastic embrace of this legislation by prominent academics. In response, probusiness lobbyists launched a wide array of initiatives to roll back the New Deal. One landmark in this anti–New Deal crusade occurred in 1971, when, in a pointed memorandum for the US Chamber of Commerce, future Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell warned that the professoriate had launched an "attack" on the "free enterprise system" and urged corporate leaders to fight back by bankrolling an intellectual counterestablishment.[2]

This essay contends that this academic counteroffensive had been well underway by the time Powell prepared his memorandum, and that it has a more complicated lineage, and a less straightforward relationship with the professoriate, than is often supposed. Its theme is the establishment by corporate philanthropists at Harvard University in 1958 of a major research institute—the Center for the Study of Liberty—to foster innovative scholarship in American history. This institute was the brainchild of Arthur W. Page, a prominent public relations executive who, following his retirement as vice president for public relations at the telephone giant American Telephone and Telegraph, turned his attention to philanthropy. Page founded the

center to reorient American historical writing away from political economy, a topic of compelling interest for the previous generation, and toward civil society, by which Page meant the working lives of the American people. The mainspring of the American experience, in Page's view, was, or ought to be, social history and not political history. Unfortunately, American historians wrote far too much about politics, and, in particular, about the positive role of governmental institutions in regulating big business, and far too little about the everyday activities of ordinary Americans. As a public relations specialist, Page recognized that public attitudes could be altered through the artful reframing of controversial issues. The Center for the Study of Liberty was the culmination of a long campaign to apply the time-tested techniques of public relations to the writing of American history.

Political economy and civil society are, of course, not necessarily opposed. Both, for example, were favorite themes of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment social theorists who would prove so influential in the United States. For Page, however, as well as for his allies in the business community, political economy and civil society had come by the mid-1950s to be regarded as distinct and even antagonistic.

Page's conception of social history originated in a very different intellectual milieu from the environment that spawned the "new" social history, a highly innovative style of historical scholarship that, in the United States, originated at the University of Wisconsin at around the same time that the Center for the Study of Liberty at Harvard opened its doors. The new social historians devoted particular attention to social movements that they presumed to be largely independent of the state. In the language of the day, they aspired to write history "from the bottom up." Among the phenomena these historians found compelling were those social movements that revealed the often neglected agency of marginalized groups, including women, blacks, and the poor.[3]

The new social history had an avowedly liberal, and in some manifestations a programmatically radical, cast that was supportive of civil rights, women's issues, and President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

Page's social history had a different genealogy. The new social historians criticized political history as conventional and conservative. For Page, in contrast, political history was subversive and dangerous. Like many business leaders, Page found disturbing the enthusiasm with which prominent historians were rewriting American history through the lens of Roosevelt's New Deal. Corporate philanthropy, in his view, could reverse this worrisome trend by recalibrating the balance between political economy and civil society.

Page had a point. Much of the most influential historical writing on the United States in 1940s and 1950s had been broadly sympathetic to the expansion of the American state that had been catalyzed by the New Deal and augmented by the Second World War. Among the many historians to participate in this post–New Deal revisionism were Oscar Handlin, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Richard Hofstadter. Handlin's pro–New Deal sympathies shone through in *Commonwealth* (1947), a richly detailed monograph, coauthored with his wife Mary, that documented the huge array of tasks the Massachusetts government performed in the early republic. Partial funding for *Commonwealth* came from the Social Science Research Council, a philanthropic organization that had mounted a research initiative to investigate the role of government in American economic development in the period before Roosevelt came to power in 1933.[4] Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s contribution to the revisionist canon included his *Age of Jackson* (1945), a Pulitzer Prize–winning interpretative survey of early nineteenth-century public life that helped to legitimate the New Deal by portraying the Jacksonians as the New Dealers' ideological ancestor. Schlesinger would go on to serve as a speechwriter for the Democratic presidential contender Adlai Stephenson in 1952 and 1956; shortly thereafter, he published a massive, three-volume history of the United States between 1921 and 1936 that voted for Roosevelt on every page.[5] Hofstadter's revisionism was less pointed than Schlesinger's, but no less sweeping. In his Pulitzer Prize–winning *Age of Reform* (1955), Hofstadter contended that the achievement of the New Deal lay in the extent to which it transcended the crippling limitations of the earlier populist and progressive movements with which it had so often been compared. Hofstadter was more explicitly critical of the pre–New Deal reform tradition than Handlin or Schlesinger; even so, he fully shared their conviction that political economy deserved a prominent place on the historian's agenda.

For Page, this was all quite unsettling. Like many American business leaders, Page opposed the recent expansion of the federal government as an assault upon foundational civic ideals. Some of Page's colleagues mounted an ambitious advertising campaign to champion "free enterprise," a relatively new meme popularized following Roosevelt's landslide reelection in 1936 to tilt public opinion against the New Deal.[6] By 1952, according to *Fortune* editor William H. Whyte Jr., the free enterprise advertising campaign, which Whyte derided as a hopeless failure, was costing corporations $100 million a year.[7] Although Page was himself a principled critic of the New Deal, he derided the free enterprise campaign as foolish and counterproductive and refused to permit it to be identified with American Telephone and

Telegraph.[8] To shift the boundaries between state and society, in his view, it would be far more productive to shape the outlook of the rising generation of historians. It would be overly simplistic to dismiss Page as a big-business apologist intent on making the world safe for the giant corporations that by midcentury had come to dominate the American economy. Yet as Page's voluminous correspondence makes plain, there can be little doubt that in establishing the Center for the Study of Liberty at Harvard, he hoped to win in the history books a contest that corporate America had lost at the polls.

Arthur W. Page was one of the most highly respected of the first generation of public relations practitioners in the United States. When Page entered the field in 1927, corporate public relations had yet to emerge as a distinct occupational specialty. By the time of Page's retirement in 1946, specialists in corporate public relations had become a fixture at many of the nation's leading corporations. Although Page was less well known than Ivy Lee or Edward L. Bernays, he may well have done more to shape the field. It was, for example, neither Bernays nor Lee, but Page, who devised the code of ethics for public relations professionals—known as the "Page Principles"—that would long define best practice, and that remain influential today.

Page's appointment at American Telephone and Telegraph was something of a landmark in the field. Never before had a public relations specialist obtained such a high-level appointment at a giant corporation. American Telephone and Telegraph was at this time the capstone of a vast telephone cartel, known as the "Bell System," or, colloquially, simply as Bell, that would dominate the provisioning of telephone service in the United States from the 1910s until its court-ordered breakup in 1984. Page remained at Bell for twenty years, making him one of the most prominent public relations executives in the country during the tumultuous epoch that spanned the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Second World War.

Outside of the field of public relations, Page is best known to posterity as the author of the 1,160-word statement that President Harry S. Truman released to the public in August 1945 following the detonation at Hiroshima of the first atomic bomb. The willingness of Truman's secretary of war, Henry L. Stimson, to tap Page to craft this public statement testifies not only to Stimson's esteem for Page but also to the high regard the field of public relations had come by this time to enjoy. Few business leaders had a sounder grasp of the mainsprings of public opinion or of the myriad techniques by which it could be shaped.

Like so many specialists in public relations, Page came to the field following a career as a journalist. Page's father, Walter Hines Page, had been the founder of *World's Work*, a highly successful New York City–based mass-circulation magazine. Following Page's graduation from Harvard in the class of 1901, he joined the staff of his father's magazine, where he would remain for the next twenty-six years, first as a reporter, and beginning in 1913 as editor. *World's Work* provided Page with a laboratory in which he could experiment with the framing of public issues. Unlike rival mass-market periodicals such as *McClure's* and *Collier's*, *World's Work* unabashedly celebrated the country's industrial might. While *McClure's* and *Collier's* ran muckraking exposés of business misdeeds, *World's Work* celebrated American business achievements, establishing journalistic conventions that would later become commonplace at *Fortune* and *Business Week*. Page found these conventions compelling. For the rest of his life, he would hail the "world's work" of the American people as an epic theme.

Page's political outlook owed a good deal to his personal background. Born in North Carolina in 1883, he inherited from his father the "New South" probusiness boosterism characteristic of progressive-minded southern Democrats. Page's father had begun his career as a North Carolina newspaper editor, and like many progressive-minded southerners, was an enthusiastic backer of Woodrow Wilson, the first southerner to become a presidential contender since the Civil War. When Wilson won the presidency in the election of 1912, Walter received an appointment as ambassador to Great Britain. Arthur inherited his father's political identity. He backed the Democratic candidate in every presidential election until 1928, when he bolted the party to support Herbert Hoover against Al Smith. From that point onward, he would consistently vote Republican for the rest of his life.[9]

Page's interest in American history dated back at least as far as his undergraduate years at Harvard. A history major, Page took Edward Channing's survey of the early American republic and Frederick Jackson Turner's lecture course on the West. Neither seems to have made much of an impression. Although Page frequently corresponded with members of the Harvard History Department in the 1950s, he never mentioned Channing and only mentioned Turner once, and that was in passing. Yet it may well not be coincidental that two Turnerian themes—the abundance of cheap land and the contrasting social environment of the United States and Europe—recurred repeatedly in virtually everything Page wrote about the American past. "In the settlement of America we have to observe how European life entered this

continent, and how America modified and developed that life and reacted on Europe," Turner proclaimed in 1893, in setting forth a position with which Page would have heartily concurred: "The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist."[10] For Page, as for Turner, everyday experience held the key to the American past.

Page's journalistic career ended in 1927 when, at the personal request of Bell president Walter S. Gifford—who, as it happens, had been a classmate of Page's at Harvard—Page agreed to take a position at the telephone giant.

The Bell System in the 1920s was widely hailed as one of the best run and most socially progressive corporations in the world. Beginning in 1907, with the appointment of Theodore N. Vail as its president, Bell managers endorsed publicity, financial transparency, state regulation—preferably via regulatory commissions rather than direct legislation—and what Vail called "universal service." By universal service Vail meant more than the interconnection of all of the nation's telephones and the integration of the telephone and telegraph into a single hybrid network. In addition, Vail envisioned the gradual extension of local telephone service at reasonable cost to the entire population.[11] To realize this ambitious goal, Bell managers substituted public service for the maximization of the shareholders' return as their primary goal. This capacious mandate did much to diminish the influence of shareholders, the putative owners of a publicly held corporation like Bell, and would become a major ideological rationale for managerial capitalism, a business creed that gained widespread legitimacy during the First World War. In addition, it proved useful in staving off a threatened government takeover of the telephone giant during the 1930s.[12]

Page had become familiar with Vail's ideas as a staffer at *World's Work* and did his best to publicize them at Bell. In public statement after public statement, Page articulated a rationale for universal service and corporate social responsibility. Only rarely, however, did Page attribute these values to Vail himself. Instead, he identified them with Vail's successor, Walter S. Gifford. For Page, the proof text was an address on Bell policy that Gifford delivered in Dallas, Texas, in 1927, shortly after Page had joined the company. In this address, which Page often praised in later years, and which several insiders assumed Page had ghostwritten, Gifford reaffirmed Bell's commitment to providing telephone service for the many as well as the few, while maintaining the highest standards of financial propriety. Despite the scale and scope of the Bell System, Gifford observed, the country boasted no telephone millionaires, while shareholders received no "melons" in the form of excessive dividends. In Gifford's view—as well as Page's—Bell's fiscal conservatism differentiated it from the railroad and telegraph empires that had

been cobbled together in late nineteenth century by the notorious financial buccaneers William H. Vanderbilt and Jay Gould.[13]

Gifford's rhetoric was intended to forestall political opposition by identifying Bell with the public good. This strategy worked well in the prosperous 1920s, yet it failed to shield Bell from hostile public scrutiny during the Great Depression. Bell's prospects looked particularly dire following the launch in 1935 by the Federal Communications Communication (FCC) of a massive investigation of Bell business practices. Lawmakers criticized Bell's cozy relationship with telephone equipment manufacturer Western Electric and blamed Bell for suppressing a host of innovations in electrical communications. Tellingly, even relatively sympathetic accounts of the corporate giant that were published around this time, such as Horace Coon's *American Tel and Tel*, felt obliged to remind the public that Bell was the "world's biggest monopoly" and the "largest single aggregation of capital ever controlled by a single company in the history of private business enterprise."[14]

Few events proved more influential in shaping Page's understanding of American history than the Bell-FCC set-to. The nadir for Page came in 1938 with the drafting by FCC chairman Paul A. Walker of a highly critical preliminary report that recommended, among other things, that Congress grant the FCC the authority to rule on the propriety of every single major decision that Bell management made. Walker's draft report was extremely controversial. In fact, it was so contentious that it was almost immediately superseded, at Bell's behest, by a report more sympathetic to the telephone giant. Even so, the Walker report demonstrated the vulnerability of Bell to hostile legislation, a lesson Page never forgot.

The Walker report haunted Page, and he was determined to set the record straight. Page's rebuttal took the form of a book, *The Bell Telephone System*, published in 1941, in which he calmly and deliberately rebutted Walker's contention that federal administrators could operate the telephone network better than corporate managers. The level of telephone service that Bell provided its users, Page contended, was unmatched anywhere else in the world, because Bell was not a government agency, but a management-led corporation dedicated to public service. In his indictment on Bell's detractors, Page singled out for special condemnation various claims that FCC economist Noobar Danielan advanced in *AT&T: The Story of Industrial Conquest*—a trade book, published in 1939, that was based on information the FCC investigation generated. The history of Bell, in Page's view, was a tale not of industrial conquest but of technological virtuosity. Page found particularly objectionable Danielan's claim that Bell advertised only in those newspapers that had editorialized in support of Bell. No business, large or small,

that engaged in the practice of "corrupting the press," Page moralized, had a right to "live" in a democracy. Page was hardly the only Bell executive to find Danielan's book outrageous; as late as 1962, one sympathetic observer recorded, it would remain "anathema" at Bell.[15]

While Page proudly celebrated Bell, his *Bell Telephone System* deliberately downplayed the rather obvious differences between the telephone giant and the nation's many smaller and less powerful businesses. "The Bell System has no political influence," Page famously, and erroneously, declared, "and wants none."[16] In making this misleading pronouncement, Page left unmentioned the extent to which Bell had for decades lobbied state legislatures and federal regulatory agencies. For Page, however, size simply did not matter; business was business, no matter how large or small. No longer did Page find it quite so unproblematic, as he had as recently as 1927, to distinguish between giant corporations like Bell, whose management deliberately subordinated profit maximization to public service, and the many businesses for which profit maximization remained the primary goal. The "day-to-day practice of democracy," Page now explained—indeed, the "essence of the American experiment"—was to be found in the world of work—making the Bell System a part of this "greatest of all human enterprises."[17] No longer, in short, did only *certain* businesses have a social obligation.[18] Henceforth, *every* business, regardless of size, and whatever its mandate, had an obligation to serve the public: "all business in a democratic country begins with public permission and exists by public approval."[19]

Page's ideas concerning the relationship of business and democracy would continue to evolve following his retirement from Bell. Now that he was an independent business consultant, rather than a Bell executive, Page felt emboldened to generalize more broadly about the American experience. Every business, Page now contended, including even a highly regulated government-sanctioned cartel like Bell, was a voluntary association that owed its success to the same kind of bottom-up grassroots social mobilization for which the United States had been celebrated for over a century, and about which the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville had written so perceptively in his *Democracy in America* (1835; 1840).

For Page to conceive of Bell as a voluntary association seemed to him particularly apt. Although Bell was a creature of public policy, its managers coordinated a network of semiautonomous units that included a research and development complex (Bell Labs), an equipment manufacturer (Western Electric), and a constellation of regionally based telephone operating companies (the "Baby Bells"). A variant of the word "association" was even part of the phrase that Bell publicists used when describing the

telephone giant: "American Telephone and Telegraph and the associated companies."

Page's years at Bell shaped his ruminations on American history. Like the new social historians of the 1960s, Page believed that most historians paid far too much attention to government officials and far too little attention to the rest of the population. To be sure, Page was not interested, like so many of the new social historians, in shifting the locus of historical inquiry from the classes to the masses. Rather, he wanted to expand the masses to include virtually everyone who was not a government official. And in particular, Page hoped to encourage scholarship on nongovernmental forms of collective action, including, in particular, the voluntary association. Voluntary associations, in Page's view—rather than, say, legislatures or government agencies—best exemplified the shared aspirations of the many.

Page may never have read Louis Hartz's *Liberal Tradition* (1955), or, for that matter, any of the other American studies classics of the 1950s. Even so, Page and the Americanists had a good deal in common. Both took it for granted that the American experience diverged sharply from a European norm, and that this divergence helped explain why American history was so distinctive—or, in the language of the day, "exceptional." Page's exceptionalism, like Hartz's, was rooted in the colonial past. For Hartz, the absence of feudalism made American institutions distinctive; for Page, it was the weakness of its government. Hartz regarded the absence of feudalism as a limiting condition that generated a mindless liberalism that cut off American political thought from the intellectual heritage of European philosophy. For Page, weak government was a boon that empowered ordinary Americans, and, eventually, giant corporations, to generate material abundance on a scale that was altogether unprecedented in human history.

The need for a revisionist history of the American past was, in Page's view, long overdue. History professors, Page lamented, wrongly conflated American history with the history of its government rather than the history of its people. To identify a nation with its government would make a certain amount of sense for a constitutional monarchy such as Great Britain or a communist dictatorship such as the Soviet Union. Yet it was entirely inappropriate for the United States, a nation that lacked a feudal past and that, blessed as it had been with an abundance of land, had for over three centuries provided ordinary people with opportunities for economic advancement unavailable anywhere else in the world.

Nowhere was the myopia of American historians more obvious than in their neglect of the voluntary association. Incredibly, Page observed, the only professional historian to accord the voluntary association the significance

it deserved was Arthur Schlesinger Sr., who had laid out his argument in "A Nation of Joiners," his 1944 presidential address to the American Historical Association. In this address, Schlesinger praised the voluntary association as a nursery for the democratic values indispensable for a robust civil society. "Considering the central importance of the voluntary organization in American history," Schlesinger declared, "there is no doubt it has provided the people with their greatest school of self-government." No governmental institution—not even the storied New England town meeting about which Tocqueville had waxed so enthusiastic—could equal the voluntary association as a training ground for civic engagement: "By comparison, the much vaunted role of the New England town meeting as a seedbed of popular government seems almost negligible."[20]

Page found it particularly notable that Schlesinger had taken pains to lump together as "voluntary associations" organizations that were conventionally assumed to have had little in common. It was of great significance, in Page's view, that Schlesinger saw no fundamental distinction between a membership-based organization such as a fraternal order and a management-led organization such as an industrial corporation.[21] In the prewar period, historians had customarily put these two kinds of organizations into separate conceptual boxes: giant corporations were stand-ins for the few, or what was sometimes called the "interests"; fraternal orders for the many, or "the people." Business leaders knew better, and Page was delighted that Schlesinger had followed their lead.

Page applauded Schlesinger's address yet lamented that it had fallen on deaf ears. Far more characteristic of the rising generation of historians, in Page's view, was the relative indifference to civil society that he detected in the New Deal–centric hagiography of Schlesinger's namesake and son, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., who was at the time also a Harvard professor. Arthur Jr., Page complained to Wall Street banker Thomas W. Lamont in 1957, was in the process of writing a laudatory history of the Roosevelt administration, an exercise that Page regarded as more appropriate for a historian of a monarchy or a communist regime than for a historian of the United States.[22]

The facility with which Schlesinger had elided the people-versus-the-interests dichotomy in his 1944 address owed something to the historical moment in which it had been delivered. The United States in 1944 was at war, making it a patriotic imperative to emphasize the propensity of Americans from all walks of life—in business no less than in a fraternal order—to be "joiners" who enthusiastically pulled together for the public good. In addition, it anticipated the more general shift of midcentury

public intellectuals away from political economy and toward civil society in the conviction that the horrors of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism had fatally undermined the prewar identification of energetic government with the public good.[23]

Schlesinger's remarkably benign characterization of big business may also have owed at least something to the prewar corporate-funded "free enterprise" public relations campaign that business leaders had launched to undermine the moral foundations of the New Deal. This campaign had the support of several of the nation's most powerful corporations—though not Bell—and was spearheaded by a tight knit group of corporate moguls that included Pierre S. and Irénée du Pont of the DuPont Chemical Company.[24] Schlesinger himself was personally familiar with the free enterprise public relations campaign, having served between 1935 and 1938 as a paid consultant for the radio program *Cavalcade of America*—a DuPont-funded public relations project that deliberately downplayed controversial political issues in favor of edifying stories celebrating the ingenuity, self-reliance, and civic spirit of ordinary Americans.[25]

Page's faith in voluntarism was informed not only by his critique of the New Deal but also by his fear that the collectivist economic policy and egalitarian political ideology that were being aggressively championed in the Soviet Union by Communist Party officials might win the communists converts throughout Europe and around the world. To meet the challenge of Soviet collectivism, Page joined together with some of the country's leading bankers in 1947 to promote the Marshall Plan, an ambitious government project to use US capital to hasten Europe's postwar reconstruction. The Marshall Plan combined altruism with self-interest, since it presupposed that its beneficiaries would adopt economic policies supportive of US business interests and that US bankers would service the government's loans. Even so, it marked a sharp departure from the less interventionist policies that the federal government had embraced prior to the war. To combat Soviet egalitarianism, Page supported the establishment of Radio Free Europe, an anti-Soviet propaganda organ that had been covertly funded though a CIA-backed front organization, the National Committee for a Free Europe. For the rest of his life Page would view American history though a Cold War lens, a mindset that obliged him to praise certain big government projects—for example, the Marshall Plan and Radio Free Europe—even as he criticized others as the misguided by-products of New Deal planners and Soviet apparatchiks.

Page's idealization of the voluntary association fit well with the Cold War–era truism that robust voluntary associations were a counterweight

to big government and that big government stifled voluntary associations. "The fact that we enjoy limited government to the extent we do," declared Sears executive James C. Worthy in a 1954 address before the Chicago City Club in a characteristic statement of this common belief, could be explained "in no small part to the effectiveness of voluntary organizations."[26] Worthy's definition of voluntary associations—like Page's, and, for that matter, Schlesinger's—was capacious. That is, it embraced not only membership-based organizations such as a religious denomination, but also a management-led organization such as the nation's most powerful corporations. Each, Worthy believed, was a crucible of civic engagement: "The individual citizen works with and through his church and his company much as he works with and through the many other voluntary organizations he has created to help serve the many purposes he demands be served."[27]

Page found Worthy's address on voluntary associations to be exceptionally perceptive and took it upon himself to compliment Worthy on it in a personal letter that Page wrote in March 1957. Page's letter is worth considering in some detail, since it provides an unusually expansive exposition of Page's ideas regarding the relationship of government and business in the American past.

"I have never seen as good an exposition of the voluntary association's influence on American life," Page wrote Worthy, "and I have long felt as you do, that it is one of the most characteristic and important elements in our democracy." In his own "desultory and amateur" reading of American history as it had been written by academically trained historians, Page added, he had seen but "one mention of this important subject," and that had been in Schlesinger's 1944 presidential address.[28]

Too many history professors, Page warned, adhered to the "British idea" that the history of a country was a history of its government. This idea, Page explained, made sense for historians of the many countries that were governed by a ruling class. Yet it was ludicrous for a historian of the United States. Page added that he had tried, largely unsuccessfully, to interest history professors in "recording the effect" of "personal liberty" in the United States. "I have a feeling," he confided to Worthy, "that if our academic world would lay the basis of understanding of our real history in the minds of college students, the next generation of leadership would be vastly better equipped than our generation has been."[29]

To drive his point home, Page turned to history. The centrist "People's Capitalism" that flourished in the twentieth-century United States, Page explained—echoing a slogan that had been popularized by the probusiness

Advertising Council in the 1940s, and that would be embraced by President Dwight D. Eisenhower as a pillar of his administration's economic policy—was a "logical later chapter" of the history of "personal liberty," a history that Page traced back to the earliest settlements in colonial Virginia.[30] When the first colonists landed in Jamestown in 1607, Page observed, the great mass of the people of Europe worked as agricultural laborers for a landed aristocracy. In colonial America, in contrast, "owner farmers" prevailed. "There was land aplenty, which was opportunity aplenty," with widespread land ownership becoming the "original basis" of the "first real experiment in human history of personal liberty for the masses."[31]

Like Tocqueville, Page regarded the colonial era as the cradle of American values. Unlike Tocqueville, yet like so many of Page's fellow southerners, Page traced the origins of American democracy not to New England, but to Virginia. Distant English government officials tried to export a ruling class and to impose a feudal order, without success. As a consequence, Virginians had the chance to exercise a greater sense of personal responsibility and "general altruism" than was possible at this time anywhere else in the world: "The Voluntary Association is the result."[32]

Page's glowing account of seventeenth-century Virginia is likely to startle anyone familiar with recent historical writing on colonial America. After all, it ignored the centrality in Virginia of involuntary servitude, slavery, and Native Americans, topics that are now integral to its history. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss his account as the ravings of a reactionary crank. For Page was no reactionary, at least by the standards of the day. Page supported government regulation of big business and believed that giant corporations, such as Bell, had an obligation to the public that transcended their obligation to their shareholders. For every business leader, Page reminded Worthy, public service, and not the maximization of shareholder value, must be their "first objective." This goal, Page was quick to add, was by no means incompatible with the generation of large profits, which Page praised for creating the confidence, and the revenue stream, necessary for the socially responsible corporation to thrive.[33]

Page's interest in the history of voluntary associations was stimulated by his conviction that Americans failed to recognize the democratic potential of the giant corporation. Here Page built on his own long-standing belief as a public relations professional that the most effective form of public relations consisted neither of press releases, nor even of paid advertising and sponsored radio broadcasts, but rather in the meritorious conduct of the corporation's own employees. Every single corporation in the United States, Page lectured Worthy, had been chartered by a state legislature that

represented its people, presumably as "consumers." Corporations, thus, were a "servant of the public" that had been created by "public act" and that owed their future to their continuing "good behavior." Yet no great enterprise could be expected to achieve the "good behavior" that its charter required by "merely trying to stay within the law." It was not enough, that is, to avoid the kind of monopolistic practices that had been prohibited by the Sherman Antitrust Act, one of the "great enactments defining good behavior." Rather, the corporate good citizen, like the "personal" good citizen, must have "wisdom, responsibility, and a belief in serving his fellow men": "Neither the corporation nor the individual can serve much without a profit, but each must know that serving the public is the first objective."[34]

Page elaborated on his vision of American history in numerous letters on the current state of history teaching that he wrote between 1957 and 1959. In these letters, Page urged opinion leaders to reframe the teaching of American history to foreground social factors, such as the social mobility of employees up the corporate ladder, and to marginalize political factors, such as the constraints on corporate management that the regulatory apparatus of the federal government imposed. It was better, Page explained to banker Thomas S. Lamont, to study what people have done with their liberty, rather than the government under which they lived: "The people are the players. The government is the umpire. To understand the game it is better to watch the players rather than the umpire."[35] It is my "firm belief," Page informed Westinghouse executive Gwilym A. Price, that the student could not reach his "maximum" as an American citizen unless he understood "how it happened that the people in the United States have reached a standard of living, a conception of voluntary association, and a habit of generosity far beyond other countries." Unfortunately, however, this civics lesson had yet to find its way into the classroom. On the contrary, undergraduate history courses continued to focus narrowly on the history of the government, ignoring Tocqueville's arresting insight that the "health of a democratic society" could be "measured" by the "quality of functions performed by private citizens."[36]

Business management in the United States, Page explained to a chemical company executive, differed from business management in other countries to the extent that it was "dominated" by a "belief in opportunity for all" and committed to "responsibility for the general welfare." The distinctiveness of American corporate management, in turn, was "one of the most important aspects" of the "results of liberty" in the United States: "For had the corporate device been used to create a privileged class and reduce general opportunity, the results would have been quite different."[37]

Page coupled his highly admiring account of business management with a sharply critical assessment of government grants for higher education. Government grants for research and scholarships, Page warned an officer of the Carnegie Foundation in 1957, had become so ubiquitous that the professoriate was in danger of losing its intellectual autonomy. To wean the academy from its dangerous dependency on government largesse, Page believed, it needed a "dose of poverty."[38] Almost two decades before Lewis Powell would craft his 1971 memorandum, Page had become convinced that the nation's leading colleges and universities were fast becoming wards of the state.[39] Unlike Powell, however, Page chose to bore from within. Following the lead of the Chicago drugstore magnate Charles R. Walgreen—who in the 1930s had established a foundation at the University of Chicago that, after his death, would underwrite the hiring of a topflight team of market-oriented professors to institutionalize the "Chicago school" of economics—Page worked within the system, rather than against it.[40]

What the country needed, Page counseled Williams College president James P. Baxter, was the establishment with corporate funding of a beachhead in the academy to remind the rising generation of the founders' conviction that "free men needed little government." For too long the professoriate had adhered to the "English idea" that the history of a country was a history of its government. As a consequence, most Americans knew *only* political history, rather than the "relations of business in a democracy." To remedy this disturbing omission, Page implored business leaders to fund historians willing to reframe the nation's history as a saga of "personal freedom" rather than as a "record of the activities of our government."[41]

Page qualified his faith in corporate philanthropy with a realists' deference to the professoriate. Academic historians, Page freely conceded, had a "complete monopoly" of "propaganda in history," and he was "content with that." Even the characterization of history as "propaganda" held no terrors for Page. Propaganda was nothing but "talking for a purpose." If communication lacked a purpose, everyone should remain silent. And since history was propaganda, Page's goal was simple: change the tune.[42]

The reappraisal of American history that Page envisioned would, Page predicted, have salutary political consequences. If historians reframed the American past as a chronicle not of politics but of society, future elections would have "different results" than they had in 1932, when Roosevelt had bested Hoover, inaugurating the New Deal. The current, highly distorted liberal consensus on the American past had become an encumbrance not only for farmers, scientists, and church leaders but also for the many college graduates who went into business: "A historically well-educated industrial

leadership would never have needed [a] public relations counsel" such as himself.[43]

Page's tenure at Bell had accustomed him to thinking in expansive terms about sponsored research, and his venture in historical revisionism was no exception. By sponsored research Page had in mind more than the publication of a stand-alone probusiness academic monograph, such as, for example, an anti-Danielan history of the telephone industry. If Danielan had been Page's primary target, Page might well have confined himself to the preparation of a telephonic cousin to Forrest McDonald's revisionist biography of electric power magnate Samuel Insull, a monograph that McDonald prepared with financial backing from the electric power industry, and that would be published by the University of Chicago Press in 1962.[44] To reframe American history, Page believed, would require, at a minimum, the establishment of at least one research institute at a prestigious university. To "spread" his "thesis" about the distinctiveness of the American experience, Page explained in 1957 to a public relations counsel at DuPont, he hoped to persuade a "great university" to establish a center for the "comparative study" of the fruits of liberty in the United States and around the world.[45] The publications that such an institute generated, in turn, could be expected to influence a rising cohort of historians, and, through them, the future generations of opinion leaders who attended their classes and read their books. The roots of American liberty, Page declared, in a memorandum outlining his vision of the proposed research institute, were to be found neither in the arts nor literature, but instead in the production and distribution of goods and services, the "physical well being of the people," and the "voluntary association" of the people for the common good. A research institute dedicated to the exploration of this theme, Page predicted, would over time have a "pervasive effect" not only in the academy but also in the wider society.[46]

Page was well positioned to realize his goal. Although he had never held an academic appointment, he had served for several years in the 1950s as an elected trustee of the American Historical Association, a position that had introduced him to history professors throughout the country. Page's connections with his alma mater, Harvard University, were particularly strong. In addition to having graduated from the college, Page had for decades been active in alumni affairs and was currently a university overseer. Page's backers at Harvard included the university librarian, and ex-provost, Paul H. Buck. Buck, himself a historian, had recently coauthored a Ford Foundation–funded study on the "Role of Education in American History," and was eager to seek out outside funding to boost historical research; predictably enough, he regarded Page's venture as a means to this end.[47]

To fund his venture, Page lobbied the leaders of some of the nation's largest and most powerful corporations. The mobilization of corporate philanthropy for sponsored research was in no sense a new development in the 1950s.[48] The novelty of Page's venture lay, rather, in the self-assurance with which he linked corporate funding with the reframing of historical writing on the American past. Academically trained historians, Page reminded General Motors executive Alfred P. Sloan, in a letter intended to elicit from Sloan a financial contribution for Page's institute, glorified the regulation of business by government "in such a manner as to leave the impression that business, particularly big business, is a menace to the nation."[49] For Page this was bunk; everyone who has "experienced the blessings of freedom in business" should be eager to recruit historians to set the record straight. Sloan, for one, was unimpressed. "You pay your money and nothing happens," Sloan explained, in justification of his decision not to contribute: "I think it is money going down the drain."[50]

Sloan's misgivings notwithstanding, Page's letter-writing campaign bore fruit. In response to Page's request, the Richardson Foundation awarded a $40,000 grant to the History Department at the University of North Carolina to hire Elisha P. Douglass to write a history of American business, a project that resulted in the publication in 1971 of Douglass's *Coming of Age of American Business: Three Centuries of Enterprise, 1600–1900*. An even larger grant arrived shortly thereafter from the Carnegie Foundation, a philanthropy on whose board Page served as a director. At Page's behest, the foundation earmarked $200,000 to the Harvard History Department to establish a Center of the Comparative Study of Liberty, a sum equivalent to $1.6 million in 2014 dollars.[51] The Carnegie grant was the first of several corporate grants that the Harvard center received. By 1961, for example, it would obtain additional funding from the Eli Lilly Endowment, the United States Steel Foundation, the Kennecott Copper Foundation, and the Hudson Gas Corporation.[52] By this time, even the philanthropic foundation that bore Sloan's name had made a modest grant to help cover its costs.[53]

Page regarded the establishment of the Harvard center as a personal coup and monitored its progress closely. Harvard might well be the most effective single source for the "creation and dissemination of ideas" in the educational world, Page gloated to Sloan, and the educational world was "unquestionably" the most effective "distributor" of ideas to the American people.[54]

Page's institute opened at Harvard in 1958, with history professor Oscar Handlin as its first director. The Harvard center, whose name was soon shortened to the Center for the Study of Liberty in America, bore this name until

1966, when, following a hefty bequest from the widow of a prominent lawyer and legal scholar, it was reorganized as the Charles Warren Center, which it remains today.[55] Under Handlin's capable leadership, the center offered fellowships to twenty-nine historians, many of whom would go on to distinguished careers. Among them were Bernard Bailyn, Rowland T. Berthoff, Morton Keller, Leonard W. Levy, Gerald D. Nash, William G. McLoughlin, and Clarence L. Ver Steeg.[56] Prominent scholars associated with the center in its early years included David Riesman, V. O. Key, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Willard Hurst.[57] Along with the Davis Center at Princeton University, founded in 1968 by the investment banker Shelby Cullom Davis, the Harvard center would quickly establish itself as a seedbed for some of the most innovative historical scholarship in the country.

Page's role at the center was confined primarily to its founding. Page remained in touch with Handlin until his death in 1960, but there is little evidence that he had any direct influence on the center's day-to-day administration. Even so, it is suggestive that there remained a distinct overlap between Page's political goals and the intellectual agenda for the center that were set forth in an early undated memoranda, "The Origins of American Freedom and What the People Have Done with It." Of the general themes that the memoranda put high on the center's agenda were two of special interest to Page: the "limited role of the state" and "voluntary modes of action" in religious, economic, cultural, and philanthropic organizations.[58] Among the specific topics that Page would have found appealing were the business corporation as a *voluntary association*, 1840–1900, and the rejection of government ownership of the "telephone system" in the 1910s.[59]

While this memorandum suggests that the center's intellectual agenda was compatible with Page's political goals, several of Page's correspondents remained unconvinced. It had been a mistake, they predicted, for Page to have located his institute at Harvard, since, under Handlin's direction, it was certain to stray from Page's political goals. Three of the members of the center's advisory committee, sputtered the conservative Northwestern University political scientist Kenneth W. Colegrove, were Jewish, including Handlin, while Handlin and Riesman were socialists: "I would not object to one or two Jews. But three are altogether too many on a committee of that size. . . . There is no balance." To make matters worse, the center's steering committee did not include a single Catholic, even though Catholics were "deeply interested in liberty."[60] Anti-Jewish sentiment inside the academy remained strong, especially among conservatives, as did hostility to socialism, making it seem inconceivable for Colegrove to entrust academics from

such a background and who held such political views with the sacred task of promoting the cause of liberty in a hostile world.

Page responded to Colegrove's critique in a letter to Williams College president James P. Baxter. Page conceded to Baxter that he did not know personally any of the members of the committee other than Buck and Handlin. Even so, Page did not believe that they could be "anti-liberty or anti-American" if they had been chosen by Buck: "If you knew these men will you call me on the telephone or write me in confidence what you think of them as a committee for the Center?"[61]

If Baxter responded to Page's inquiry, no record of it survives. Yet in certain respects, Colegrove's critique was on the mark. The Harvard center would devote scant attention to the libertarian legacy of colonial Virginia, a favorite topic of Page's, while it lavished funding on the preparation by Handlin and his coauthor and wife Mary F. Handlin of the *Dimensions of Liberty*, a prospectus of the center's research agenda that linked the *elaboration* of voluntary associations in the twentieth century with the *expansion* of the federal government, a conclusion that Page would have almost certainly deplored.[62] Unlike Page, the Handlins traced the origins of the "system of free private enterprise" not to the colonial era, but, rather, to the mid-nineteenth century, when antimonopolists wary of special privilege articulated a "liberal demand" for the divorce of the state from the economy.[63] And unlike Page the Handlins regarded the "key relation" in the modern corporation to be not the public-mindedness of its management but the "voluntary membership" of its shareholders through their "investment in capital stock."[64] On one critical issue, however, the Handlins and Page agreed: the corporation *was* a voluntary association, even though, the Handlins candidly conceded, Americans until quite recently had only rarely described it in these terms. The unwillingness of earlier generations of Americans to conceive of the corporation in this way was for the Handlins easily explained: nineteenth-century Americans typically characterized the corporation as "private" rather than "voluntary," since they lumped it together with the religious denomination, a "private entity" that operated outside of the purview of the state.[65]

Page responded to his critics by underscoring the affinities between the center's work and the probusiness agenda that had been for him its primary rationale. To make his point, Page adopted a somewhat more self-consciously boosterish vocabulary than would have been customary for a Bell executive, or even a Bell director, which Page would remain for many years following his official retirement from Bell. The fundamental ideal that

the center had been established to promote, Page now averred, was the centrality to American history not merely of the voluntary association but of "free enterprise." Page's reference to "free enterprise" was something of a new departure; during his many years at Bell, for example, he had pointedly refused to link the telephone giant with the "free enterprise" crusade. Now that he was longer constrained by his corporate position, Page embraced the new terminology with the fervor of a true believer. Neither the Handlins' *Dimensions of Liberty*, Page conceded to Lamont, nor Handlin's annual report as the center's director, would "I think, satisfy the gentlemen on the far right who distrust Harvard's fundamental belief in free enterprise." Neither, after all, declared "flatly," as would Page, that free enterprise was the "real basis of America's greatness." Even so, having talked with Handlin, Page remained convinced that by the time the center was finished with its "academic evolutions" the "result will be good."[66]

In no sense was Page the *originator* of the center's emphasis on voluntary action and small government. Like so many prominent specialists in public relations, Page was more of a popularizer than an original thinker. American historians had been lamenting the narrow focus of their field on political history for decades, with periodization schemes organized around presidential administrations—the so-called and much-ridiculed presidential synthesis—being a particular focus for critique. Even so, Page's agenda would cast a long shadow on the professoriate. Harvard exercised more influence nationwide over the training of graduate students in American history in the 1960s than it does today, and Handlin was one of the nation's preeminent mentors of the rising generation of American historians. Several of the historians who received center fellowships, including Rowland T. Berthoff, Gerald D. Nash, and Morton Keller, would go on to write extensively on the history of government-business relations. Berthoff and Keller, though not Nash, viewed this topic—like Page—primarily through the lens of civil society rather than political economy. Handlin's influence on this cohort of historians was forcibly impressed upon me a few years ago when, in a conversation with Jack N. Rakove, a Stanford University political historian who had obtained a PhD in history from Harvard in 1975, I asked what book he recommended as an overview of nineteenth-century American government; Rakove unhesitatingly proposed the Handlins' *Dimensions of Liberty*.[67] Fittingly, the Handlins' dedicated this book to Page, who had died shortly before its publication, as a "Friend of Liberty and of Learning."[68] It was Page, they elaborated in their acknowledgments, who had first conceived the idea of a "sustained scholarly effort" to "describe the character of American free institutions": "We only regret that he did not live to see the appearance of

the first fruits of a project close to his interests."[69] Handlin reiterated his indebtedness to Page in a letter to Bell board chairman Frederick R. Kappel that Handlin wrote shortly after Page's death. "Our center," Handlin declared, "owes its existence to the interest of Mr. Arthur W. Page."[70]

Dimensions of Liberty remains the single-best overview of the center's intellectual agenda. The study of liberty in all its facets, the Handlins contended, was but a "single subject": how was it that "men pursued their hopes for achievement by cooperating voluntarily or by consenting to be governed."[71] Voluntary cooperation, in turn, entailed the establishment of voluntary associations, which had sometimes served the ends of the state but which also, and more importantly, has offered an "alternative" to it—making it an "essential factor" in the "development" of American liberty.[72]

The tone of *Dimensions*, as one might expect, given the intellectual climate out of which it had emerged, was full of foreboding. Like Page, the Handlins found the simmering Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union deeply troubling and were far from sanguine about the future. "The preservation of liberty," they proclaimed in their opening sentence, "is the preeminent problem of our times." The worldwide spread of freedom that once seemed destined to "spread toward horizons of indefinite extension" had come to be threatened by "hostile forces of overwhelming power"—by which they meant the Soviet Union and it allies. And the emergence of a threat of such magnitude raised the question of whether the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin might indeed have been correct when he claimed that the idea of freedom might soon become a mere curiosity.[73] Such considerations, the Handlins added, had led them to establish the center in 1958.[74]

One project that Handlin hoped the center would sponsor was never consummated. Between 1960 and 1963, Handlin worked closely with faculty members at Northwestern University and the Harvard Business School to lay the groundwork for a major, archivally based history of the Bell System. Whether or not Page had suggested this project is uncertain. It is not inconceivable that Handlin, as a savvy administrator, made it a priority following Page's death in 1960 in order to perpetuate the center's relationship with Bell. What can be confidently asserted is that the project dated back to 1958, a period in which Page's relationship to the center was particularly close, and eventuated, following Page's death, in a November 1961 meeting at Bell's baronial headquarters at 195 Broadway in New York City at which both Handlin and Bell board chairman Frederick R. Kappel were present. "Very little of a constructive character," Kappel had lamented the previous month in a letter to a likeminded Harvard Business School professor, had

been "written recently" about the early history of his company, and "practically nothing at all in a scholarly vein." The Handlin-Kappel meeting had been set up to help remedy this situation.[75]

Handlin's rationale for the proposed telephone history echoed themes Page had long championed. It would be particularly valuable, Handlin believed, to explore the abortive movement to nationalize the telephone industry in the 1910s. "Such a history," Handlin wrote, in a memorandum on his meeting at 195 Broadway, "would throw light on some of the important subjects of concern to the Center, particularly on the role of voluntary associations in the economy and on the distinction of public from private spheres of activity." Two developments related to the position of Bell as a private enterprise seemed to Handlin to be particularly worthy of investigation. They were the circumstances that "permitted" the telephone in the United States to remain a "free private enterprise" at a time when the medium was being absorbed by the state in much of the rest of the world, and the shift in American public opinion between 1900 and 1920 that led to the recognition that "private was preferable to governmental operation in this sphere."[76]

Much depended, of course, on the identity of the author of the proposed study. Handlin confided to a Bell executive that he anticipated that the study might be written by someone like Harold C. Passer, whose publications included a monograph on the late nineteenth-century electrical manufacturing business, or Morton Keller, author of a sympathetic biography of the archconservative early twentieth-century corporate lawyer James M. Beck. David Riesman suggested E. Digby Baltzell, a sociologist who had recently published a historically oriented analysis of Philadelphia's Protestant elite.[77]

The proposed telephone history never got off the ground, falling victim, as would so many similar business histories from this period, to the scruples of in-house corporate lawyers fearful of the potentially adverse antitrust implications of a full public disclosure of their past business activities.[78] Yet its rationale does highlight a dimension of liberty that Page's own historical writings deliberately concealed. Like so many giant corporations, Bell was as much a creature of government regulation as it was the by-product of market incentives and technological imperatives. This was a fact that Page's stark opposition between political economy and civil society had done much to obscure.

The court-ordered dismantling of the Bell System in 1984 underscored the limitations of Page's vision of American history. The Bell System had been a victim less of government giantism run amok than of an antimonopoly deregulatory movement that rejected the politically inflected regulatory

compromises that Page, as the longtime head of Bell's formidable public relations machine, had worked so diligently and for so long to defend. Bell had indeed been an association of corporations, yet in no sense was this association voluntary. On the contrary, it owed its existence to a constellation of intricate political compromises concerning rate structures and service standards.[79] Voluntarism was, and is, a social process rather than a moral imperative, a means rather than an end. To make voluntarism a centerpiece of historical analysis, as Page had, was ultimately to obscure its embeddedness in a political economy that had the potential, as Page had recognized all along, to repudiate the compromises upon which the corporation that he had long championed had been built.

The legacy of Page's mobilization of corporate philanthropy on historical writing is diffuse, yet multifaceted. The kind of social history that Page tried to encourage was obviously different from the self-consciously radical and antiestablishment new social history that emerged at roughly the same time at the University of Wisconsin. The new social history had many sources, including some that were transnational, and its implications were not easily contained.[80] Even so, Page's project and the new social history had more in common than one might at first surmise. Each warned portentously that the current generation of academic historians had egregiously distorted the historical record; each held a dim view of the state; and each placed great faith in the wisdom of the masses, even as they differed widely as to who the masses were and why they mattered. Or, to put it somewhat differently, it is worth recalling that the enthusiasm for civil society by social historians has a somewhat more complicated lineage than is often assumed, and that at least part of their fascination with voluntary associations, social mobility, history from the "bottom up," and the large percentage of Americans whose names never found their way into the newspapers, was indebted to Page's efforts to promote a style of historical writing that would skew the boundary between state and society so far *from* political economy and *toward* civil society as to render governmental institutions largely irrelevant to the American past.

The legacy of Page's center on historical writing at Harvard is even more direct. It remains a matter of record that several of the most gifted American historians in Handlin's orbit during the 1960s, including Gordon S. Wood and Morton Keller, popularized an approach to the study of the relationship of government and society that Page would have found congenial. Among the habits of mind these historians shared was a skeptical attitude toward the

early American state as an agent of change. Wood's Pulitzer Prize–winning *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991) marginalized the Federalists and the governmental institutions they established, contending that, with Thomas Jefferson's victory in the presidential election of 1800, the United States turned decisively away from the statist project that the Federalists had endorsed. Keller, similarly, has remained consistent over many years in his contention that the nineteenth-century American state was exceedingly weak, that the political "regime" the Jacksonians established remained pretty much in place until the New Deal, and that the New Deal marked a sharp and irrevocable rupture in American public life.[81]

The legacy of Page's center can also be traced, albeit more ambiguously, in Bernard Bailyn's Pulitzer Prize–winning *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967), one of the great works of historical scholarship to be published in the 1960s. The seed for *Ideological Origins* lay in an essay that Bailyn prepared as the introduction to a projected four-volume collection of pamphlets written by American colonists on the eve of the War of Independence. This volume, which Bailyn dedicated to Handlin, and which grew out of a project on early American politics that Bailyn had worked on at the center, was introduced by a remarkable essay that would be later expanded and published as *Ideological Origins*, in which Bailyn set forth a compelling and highly influential explanation for the American Revolution.[82] In the revised version of this essay, Bailyn elaborated in luminous prose and with great insight on the fundamentally antistatist "contagion of liberty" in the 1770s that propelled the founders of the American republic to transform a moderate critique of the British state into a far more radical assault on slavery, religious establishments, and social hierarchy. The revolution, in short, at least in its opening phase, was an epic struggle between liberty and power in which liberty won. The "primary goal" of the Revolution, Bailyn declared, in an oft-quoted passage, was "the preservation of political liberty threatened by the apparent corruption of the constitution, and the establishment in principle of the existing conditions of liberty."[83] It would not be until many years later, in an expanded edition of *Ideological Origins* that included a new chapter on the ideological contest of the 1780s, that Bailyn would emphasize the constructive state-building role of the founders, an elaboration that can be read as a critique not only of Wood's *Radicalism*, but also of Wood's earlier *Creation of the American Republic*, which had been published in 1968, a mere two years following the reorganization of the center in 1966.[84]

Handlin remained committed to the completion of a full-scale history of liberty in the United States, a project for which he regarded *Dimensions of Liberty* as the prolegomena. This ambitious project eventually came to

fruition with the publication between 1986 and 1994 of a hefty four-volume history of "liberty in America" from 1600 to the present that Handlin coauthored with his second wife, Lillian, Mary having died in 1976.[85] By the time these sprawling tomes found their way into print, Handlin's well-honed combination of oracular pronouncements with pointillistic detail was no longer in vogue, while the intellectual agenda that Handlin had championed in *Dimensions of Liberty* had become unmanageably diffuse. The volumes received mixed reviews from their colleagues, several of whom focused on the problematic definition of its theme. "One lesson of this book," wrote a reviewer of volume four in the *American Historical Review*, was that "any seemingly neutral definition of liberty such as 'ability to act' is not feasible": "The content of action is inseparable from the ability to act."[86]

Historians in the 1960s shifted their attention from political economy to civil society for a multitude of reasons that had nothing to do with the establishment of Harvard's Center for the Study of Liberty. Even so, it would be a mistake to discount the influence of corporate philanthropy upon historical writing. In an age when research support for historical research was less generous that it would later become, cultural entrepreneurs like Page had the opportunity, as the founding of the Harvard center demonstrates, to shape an intellectual agenda that would leave an imprint on some of the leading historians of the age.

The Harvard center was but one of several research institutes founded in the 1950s to combat the New Deal. The Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, an organization dedicated to the study of American business and technological history that received generous funding from the Du Pont family, had a similar rationale, as did the foundation at the University of Chicago established by drugstore magnate Charles R. Walgreen. The eponymous lecture series that Walgreen's foundation established eventuated in the publication of several notable history books, including David M. Potter's *People of Plenty* (1954), a nuanced yet ultimately sympathetic analysis of American economic abundance that discounted the agency of governmental institutions in bringing this abundance about.[87] The Davis Center for Historical Research at Princeton had an analogous genealogy. Funded by investment banker Shelby Cullom Davis, it championed social history over political history at a time when bankers like Davis, a movement conservative active in conservative think tanks, had good reason to be wary of the state.[88]

To document the influence of politically motivated corporate philanthropy on the funding of historical scholarship does not, of course, impugn the scholarship that this philanthropy helped to sustain. Yet it does deepen

our understanding of the intensity of the post–Second World War business crusade against the New Deal, while serving as a pointed reminder of the extent to which the boundary between state and society in the American past has long been a subject not only of dispassionate historical inquiry but also of polemical contestation and debate.

Notes

1. Several colleagues have read versions of this essay and provided useful suggestions. I am particularly grateful for the assistance of Brian Balogh, Peter S. Onuf, Kim Phillips-Fein, Mark R. Wilson, and Olivier Zunz. Special thanks to James T. Sparrow for his encouragement and advice, to Emily Bahr-de Stefano for checking citations, and to Seth Cotlar for the invitation to give a lecture at Willamette University in 2005 at which I first tried out in public some of the ideas in this essay.
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4. Oscar Handlin and Mary Handlin, "Preface to the Revised Edition," *Commonwealth: A Study in the Role of Government in the American Economy: Massachusetts, 1774–1861*, rev. ed. (1947; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), vii–x.
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6. Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 2; William L. Bird Jr., *"Better Living": Advertising, Media, and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership, 1935–1955* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), chap. 7; Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
7. Robert Griffith, "The Selling of America: The Advertising Council and American Politics, 1942–1960," *Business History Review* 57 (Autumn 1983): 3; William H. Whyte Jr., et al., "The Great Free Enterprise Campaign," in *Is Anybody Listening?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), chap. 1.
8. Noel L. Griese, *Arthur W. Page: Publisher, Public Relations Pioneer, Patriot* (Tucker, GA: Anvil Publishers, 2001), 195, 269. All unattributed biographical details concerning Page's career in this essay are drawn from Griese. Additional information on Page's public relations career can be found in Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chap. 2; and Richard S. Tedlow, *Keeping the Corporate Image: Public Relations and Business, 1900–1950* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1979), chap. 2. I have also profited from the opportunity to read a portion of a forthcoming biography of Page by Karen Miller Russell.
9. Griese, *Page*, 131.

10. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921), 3–4.
11. Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), chap. 10.
12. John, *Network Nation*, chap. 11.
13. Griese, *Page*, 111–12. Page would later credit the Dallas speech to Gifford, an attribution that may have been a subterfuge. Whoever wrote the speech, Page always held it in high regard; as late as 1959, for example, he praised it, in a letter to the economist Adolf A. Berle Jr., as of "immense importance" in "crystallizing opinion in the business, and creating a favorable attitude towards the business by the public." Page to Berle, October 14, 1959, box 60, Page Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (hereafter PP-HSW); Page, *The Bell Telephone System* (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), 11–14.
14. Horace Coon, *American Tel & Tel: The Story of a Great Monopoly* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1939), 2, 13.
15. Page, *Bell Telephone System*, 159, 161; Howard F. Bennett to Oscar Handlin, June 22, 1962, Handlin Papers, Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter HP-HU).
16. Page, *Bell Telephone System*, 170.
17. Ibid., 208.
18. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, chaps. 4–5.
19. Page, *Bell Telephone System*, 154.
20. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," *American Historical Review* 50 (October 1944): 24, 25.
21. Page to Worthy, March 4, 1957, box 51, PP-HSW.
22. Page to Thomas W. Lamont, May 6, 1957, box 52, PP-HSW.
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24. Robert F. Burk, *The Corporate State and the Broker State: The Du Ponts and American National Politics, 1925–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), chaps. 13–14.
25. Bird, *Better Living*, 72–82.
26. James C. Worthy, "Citizenship and Democracy: The Role of the Voluntary Civic Association," Chicago City Club, May 7, 1956, Worthy Papers, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois.
27. Worthy, "Citizenship and Democracy."
28. Page to Worthy, March 4, 1957, box 51, PP-HSW.
29. Page to Worthy, March 4, 1957, PP-HSW.
30. Page to Worthy, March 4, 1957, PP-HSW; Grant Madsen, "Lessons of Victory: Occupying Germany and Japan, Discovering the 'People's Capitalism,'" PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011.
31. Page to Worthy, March 4, 1957, PP-HSW.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Page to Thomas S. Lamont, June 30, 1958, box 60, PP-HSW.
36. Page to Gwilym A. Price, January 21, 1959, box 58, PP-HSW.
37. Page to Donald B. Woodward, July 29, 1957, box 53, PP-HSW.
38. Page to John W. Gardner, March 4, 1957, box 51, PP-HSW.

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47. Page to Buck, May 20, 1957, box 52, HP-HU.
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49. Page to Sloan, April 9, 1959, box 59, PP-HSW.
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51. Fletcher M. Green to Page, December 2, 1957, box 54; Green to Page, April 8, 1959, box 59; Elisha P. Douglass to Page, May 25, 1959, box 59; memorandum attached to Page to Hargreave, June 30, 1958, box 56; all in PP-HSW.
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53. Handlin and Handlin, *Dimensions of Liberty*, 192.
54. Page to Sloan, April 9, 1959, PP-HSW.
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56. Ibid., 30.
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58. Center for the Comparative Study of the History of Liberty in America, "The Origins of American Freedom and What the People Have Done with It" [n.d., ca. 1958], box 58, PP-HSW.
59. "Provisional List of Monograph Subjects," n.d., UAV 456.1010, HP-HU.
60. Kenneth W. Colegrove to Marguerite Pettet, July 9, 1959, box 60, PP-HSW. In a second July 9 letter to Pettet marked "personal and confidential," Colegrove raised even more pointed objections to the political outlook of the center's leadership team. Handlin was a "racial expert," which Colegrove did not intend as a compliment, whose recently published *Race and Nationality in America* "slanted toward socialism." Riesman's appointment was even more objectionable: "He is a behavioralist, radical and socialist. Most of his books, and especially his *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950) and his *Faces in the Crowd* (1952) belittle and ridicule the American tradition. He is the enemy of tradition, He is one of the last men who should share control over a project to study the history of American liberty." Ibid.
61. Page to James P. Baxter, July 17, 1959, box 60, PP-HSW.
62. Handlin and Handlin, *Dimensions of Liberty*, 111.
63. Ibid., 86–87.

64. Ibid., 103.
65. Ibid., 99.
66. Page to Lamont, February 26, 1960, box 61, PP-HSW.
67. "The history of liberty," Rakove elaborated in a thoughtful discussion of *Dimensions of Liberty*, "lay in the staple themes of the emergence and triumphs of modern forms of constitutional government": "Although still interested in the formal organization of power [as they had been in *Commonwealth*], the Handlins cast their net wider. By defining liberty not as an absence of restraint but as a capacity for action, they would have made it possible to apply this one concept to the many realms in which the modern individual acts, so that its history would embrace not only the meaning of citizenship but also the private and public uses to which liberties of all kinds can be put." Jack N. Rakove, "Some Kinds of Freedom," *Reviews in American History* 24 (September 1996): 394–95.
68. Handlin and Handlin, *Dimensions of Liberty*, dedication page.
69. Ibid., 191.
70. Handlin to Kappel, October 23, 1961, HP-HU.
71. Handlin and Handlin, *Dimensions of Liberty*, 157.
72. Ibid., 111, 112.
73. Ibid., 1.
74. Ibid., 2.
75. Frederick R. Kappel to George Albert Smith Jr., October 17, 1961, HP-HU.
76. "Memorandum" [of a conference at Bell headquarters at 195 Broadway, New York City], November 3, 1961, HP-HU.
77. "Memorandum" [of luncheon meeting with Bell Vice President Mr. Callvart], April 21, 1962; Center for the Study of the History of Liberty in America, "Minutes," UAV 456.1005; both in HP-HU.
78. "Memorandum" [of luncheon meeting with Bell Vice President Mr. Callvart], April 21, 1962 HP-HU; George Albert Smith Jr., to Handlin, December 31, 1965, box 1, folder 14, Smith Papers, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, Massachusetts.
79. John, *Network Nation*, chaps. 10–11, epilogue.
80. Oliver Zunz, ed., *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
81. Morton Keller, *Three Regimes: A New Political History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
82. Interestingly, and in accord with what appears to have been a contemporary convention, Bailyn made no reference in his acknowledgments for either volume to the organizations that had provided him with financial support. Bailyn would acknowledge the support of the center for his research on "early American politics" in a related book that he published shortly thereafter: *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), xi.
83. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 19.
84. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), postscript ("Fulfillment").
85. Oscar Handlin and Lillian Handlin, *Liberty in America: 1600 to the Present*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1986–96).

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87. Emile P. Du Pont, *"Technology at Work Here"* (Wilmington, DE: Hagley Museum, 1957); Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence*, 88–89.
88. Wolfgang Saxon, "Shelby C. Davis, Envoy and Philanthropist, 85," *New York Times*, June 1, 1994.

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