

Humanitarianism: Keywords

Humanitarianism

Keywords

Edited by

Antonio De Lauri



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON



This is an open access title distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license, which permits any non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided no alterations are made and the original author(s) and source are credited. Further information and the complete license text can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

The terms of the CC license apply only to the original material. The use of material from other sources (indicated by a reference) such as diagrams, illustrations, photos and text samples may require further permission from the respective copyright holder.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: De Lauri, Antonio, editor.

Title: Humanitarianism : keywords / edited by Antonio De Lauri.

Other titles: Humanitarianism (Brill Academic Publishers)

Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, [2020] | Summary: "Humanitarianism:

Keywords is a comprehensive dictionary designed as a compass for navigating the conceptual universe of humanitarianism. It is an intuitive toolkit to map contemporary humanitarianism and to explore its current and future articulations. The dictionary serves a broad readership of practitioners, students, and researchers by providing informed access to the extensive humanitarian vocabulary"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020034564 (print) | LCCN 2020034565 (ebook) | ISBN 9789004431133 (hardback ; alk. paper) | ISBN 9789004431140 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Humanitarianism--Dictionaries.

Classification: LCC BJ1475.3 .H863 2020 (print) | LCC BJ1475.3 (ebook) | DDC 361.7/4--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020034564>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020034565>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISBN 978-90-04-43113-3 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-43114-0 (e-book)

Copyright 2020 by Antonio De Lauri. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands. Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Hes & De Graaf, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Rodopi, Brill Sense, Hotei Publishing, mentis Verlag, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh and Wilhelm Fink Verlag. Koninklijke Brill NV reserves the right to protect this publication against unauthorized use.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

References

- Agrimi, J., Crisciani, C. (1998) Charity and Aid in Medieval Christian Civilization. In: Grmek, M., Fantini, B. eds. *Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. Harvard University Press.
- Alkan-Zeybek, H. (2012) Ethics of Care, Politics of Solidarity: Islamic Charitable Organizations in Turkey. In: Dupret, B. et al. eds. *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Benthall, J. (2018) *Charity*. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology.
- Bornstein, E. (2012) *Disquieting Gifts. Humanitarianism in New Delhi*. California University Press.
- Bowie, K. (1998) The Alchemy of Charity: Of Class and Buddhism in Northern Thailand. *American Anthropologist*, 100(2): 469–481.
- Mittermaier, A. (2013) Trading with God. Islam, Calculation, Excess. In: Boddy, J. ed. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Religion*. Wiley.

Children

Nearly 400 million children worldwide lack access to essential health care services, 264 million do not go to school, and, as of the end of 2017, 31 million have been forcibly displaced through war, violence, natural disasters, and other crises (UNICEF 2018, 2019). The world's leading child-focused aid agencies that deal with these major issues include UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, and Defence for Children International. A large number of big, medium, or small national and local organizations also have the protection of children as their main goal.

Images of suffering children capture the moral imperative of humanitarian action. Moving photos of starving babies, walking skeletons with distended stomachs, have become iconic since the Nigerian–Biafran war, one of the first televised conflicts in contemporary history. As a quintessential embodiment of victimhood, decontextualized images of childhood vulnerability articulate specific aesthetics, emotions, and politics that trigger feelings of compassion, mobilize donors' solidarity, and persuade public opinion of the need for immediate lifesaving actions, including those of a military nature. In popular imagination, saving children's lives encapsulates the essence of humanitarianism (Malkki 2015). Child-focused aid agencies operate in contexts of emergency (e.g. war, natural disaster, extreme poverty) to provide protection and care

services to children in a number of interlinked fields, from children's health and education to child development and well-being. Displaced children, trafficked children, malnourished children are special targets of humanitarian protection. Child soldiers, street children, and child workers, on the other hand, exemplify a category of victims whose "stolen childhood" is addressed through humanitarian programs of rehabilitation and social integration.

The modern project of saving "distant children" can be traced back to 19th-century missionary work, British philanthropy, and the emergence of a romantic conceptualization of "childhood" as a time of innocence in Europe. The first child rights document ever adopted by an intergovernmental organization, the 1924 League of Nations' Declaration of Children's Rights, was drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, a British social reformer best known as the founder of Save the Children. The 1959 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, subsequently replaced by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), departs from Jebb's original text and incorporates insights from (Western) developmental psychology, dictating that "children" are persons under 18 years of age, demarcated from adults by a series of psychobiological characteristics that are universally valid (Boyden 1997). The CRC marks a pivotal moment for humanitarian child protection as the first legally binding international treaty, which provides for the rights of children in several fields. However, the CRC is deeply entangled in the civilizational trajectories of Western modernity and sets out a Eurocentric standard of childhood that at times contrasts with local cultural notions of "childhood" and children's material conditions in contexts outside Europe and North America (Hart 2006). When asked about their rights, for example, street children in Johannesburg talk about the right to safely cross roads, beg, and work (Swart-Kruger and Chawla 2002); in Ethiopia, girls protest against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that define their rights in terms of autonomy and individual success, arguing that they have duties and moral responsibilities towards others as well (Nieuwenhuys 2001); in Thailand, "children" and "adults" are not locally construed as fixed age categories but as hierarchical concepts varying according to the interlocutor's social status (Bollotta 2017).

The predominance of psychological frameworks of child development in humanitarian practice can have the effect of obscuring the historical, economic, and political determinants of children's struggles, while their "deviancy" from the established standard of innocence is mainly interpreted as the result of parental abuse and/or backward beliefs. The CRC is thus in danger of harnessing long-standing colonial imaginaries of the North–South divide, where the adult/Northerner offers help to the infantilized/Southerner (Burman 2017).

The developmental formulation of children as dependent and not yet fully formed humans extends the temporal horizon of humanitarianism beyond the space of immediate crisis, making childhood the point of convergence between short-term emergency responses and long-term development endeavors. Social scientists contend that these are cultural politics of future-making for the transfer of Western social values, technologies, and professional forces (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998). As a result, child humanitarian policy has become the locus of fierce ideological battles over the political future of childhood: religious groups, NGOs, development agencies, and nation states compete at all levels to define what childhood (and society's future) is and should be.

Giuseppe Bolotta

References

- Bolotta, G. (2017) The Good Child's Duties: Childhood in Militarized Thailand. In: Pavin, C. ed. *The Blooming Years: Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
- Boyden, J. (1997) Childhood and the Policy Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood. In: James, A., Prout, A. ed. *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (2nd ed.). Falmer Press.
- Burman, E. (2017) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. (3rd ed.) Routledge.
- Hart, J. (2006) Saving Children. What Role for Anthropology? *Anthropology Today*, 22(1): 5–8.
- Malkki, L. (2015) *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Duke University Press.
- Nieuwenhuys, O. (2001) By the Sweat of their Brow? Street Children, NGOs, and Children's Rights in Addis Ababa. *Africa*, 71(4): 539–557.
- Scheper-Hughes, N., Sargent, C. eds. (1998) *Small Wars. The Cultural Politics of Childhood*. University of California Press.
- Swart-Kruger, J., Chawla, L. (2002) We Know Something Someone Doesn't Know: Children Speak Out on Local Conditions in Johannesburg. *Environment and Urbanisation*, 14(2): 85–96.
- UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2018) *Child Displacement—UNICEF Data*. www.unicef.org.
- UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) (2019) *UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2019*. www.unicef.org.