apolitical and merely as providing basic aid are nevertheless often seen as taking a political stance through these acts.

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Anti-slavery

The organized fight against slavery is arguably the pioneering form of humanitarianism aimed at alleviating the suffering of distant strangers—those not considered members of one's own local/national community or religion, yet imagined as part of a common humanity (Barnett 2011; Blackburn 1988). Before the 18th century, individual activists argued against specific types or circumstances of slavery or even, rarely, against slavery as such. However, the movement that arose in 18th-century England aiming to destroy the slavery of distant people appears to be the first formal collective endeavor, building on the recent invention of the voluntary association and the expansion of the public sphere. Its motives and methods presaged much of what would follow as humanitarianism grew, and its long-term effectiveness was demonstrated first in the country-by-country outlawing of the Atlantic slave trade, then by the end of legal colonial slavery, and eventually by the abolition of legal slavery by every independent country in the world. Yet its work is unfinished, because the end of legal slavery did not extinguish the demand for coerced labor, which the

anti-slavery movement continues to fight today (Miers 2003; Anti-Slavery International 2019).

In aims and methods, the anti-slavery movement is the archetype of what Michael Barnett (2011) has called "alchemical" humanitarianism, aspiring to remove the fundamental cause of suffering, although minor offshoots of the movement did deliver relief in the form of food, supplies, and/or services to the recently freed or unjustly enslaved. In pursuit of fundamental change in laws and enforcement, anti-slavery organizations conducted research, rallied public support, and lobbied governments, relying on the force of their arguments augmented by public opinion to sway those in the political sphere.

From the beginning of the movement, the controversies besetting anti-slavery were those that have also attended other humanitarian groups. Critics have argued that activists' energies would be better expended on helping those who suffered locally or nationally, have questioned the truthfulness of the movement's pleas for public support, and posited that activists' motivations were selfish, such as the desire for moral superiority, ego satisfaction, careerism, enrichment, or power. Like all humanitarians, the activists believed that their work would help the targets of their work lead better lives, but many questioned this premise by predicting or showing how many would be worse off. Some articulated the more general concern that humanitarians were in some way the dupes of the powerful or the unknowing agents of an exploitative system. Regarding anti-slavery, these concerns found their most influential proponent when Eric Williams (1944) postulated that the anti-slavery activists, no matter how well intentioned, were carrying out the task required by burgeoning industrial capitalism as it destroyed older forms of labor to make way for the freely contracted labor of an exploited proletariat. Although Seymour Drescher (1986, 2009) and others undermined the particulars of this argument, humanitarianism's origins in modern capitalist societies and its presence as a part of a globalized capitalist order has suggested to some that anti-slavery, like humanitarianism in general, is not only a feature of the modern world but also serves the system's needs by ameliorating its worst effects, distracting participants from pervasive exploitation or justifying its operation.

The original targets of anti-slavery groups were the slave systems of their own countries, remedying the wrongs of which their countries were guilty. Once their own legal slave systems were dismantled, the universality of their principles refocused their fight on other sovereign states, a pattern only amplified as colonial possessions achieved independence. This led to charges of paternalism and neocolonialism, particularly as the end of legal slavery meant going to other countries to ferret out illegal slavery and similar forms of

exploitation. The anti-slavery movement has tried to deal with these concerns by forming partnerships with groups in other countries.

International anti-slavery organizations, like humanitarian groups generally, have multiplied over time, from a handful of organizations in the early 19th century to at least 189 of the 1041 anti-slavery groups listed by End Slavery Now (www.endslaverynow.org); the remaining 852 groups focus on slavery within their own countries, though many receive international funding. A redefinition of their activities from ameliorative to rights-oriented also parallels changes in humanitarianism generally over the past few decades.

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Atrocity

Dictionary definitions of the word "atrocity" point to acts of extreme cruelty, brutal actions typically involving violence or bodily injury, shockingly bad and ferocious deeds. Mass cruelty and acts aiming to destroy a particular group of people have arguably been a part of human behavior since ancient time. Atrocities and mass-scale ethnic enmity were also present in the medieval world, and are extensively described in religious texts, including the Bible. World history has often been propelled forward by instances of carnage, when the destruction of people on a mass scale has been sought (Kiernan 2007). However, the language of atrocity only entered the public discourse in the Enlightenment era when an intensified fascination with suffering prompted a