IN AN AGE SUSPICIOUS OF PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY Benjamin Franklin’s reputation as a doer-of-good is something of an embarrassment for his admirers. Yet Franklin’s belief in the importance of benevolence is apparent to all who read his writings. In his private letters he speaks of the importance of good works; in his Autobiography he provides detailed accounts of his part in founding a subscription library, a fire company, the American Philosophical Society, the Pennsylvania Hospital, and the Philadelphia Academy. Modern commentators have questioned Franklin’s motives in promoting these benevolent projects, especially since Franklin based his political success in part upon the reputation he gained as a promoter of civic improvement, but even his most severe critics have granted Franklin’s effectiveness as a promoter of benevolent schemes. A less than wholly sympathetic historian has concluded: “By acting alone or as a member of a group, he achieved by mid-century a virtual monopoly of public and private welfare projects in the city. Indeed, some claimed that almost no undertaking could be considered without his advice and support.”

Given Franklin’s lifelong concern with the theory and practice of persuasive writing, it is odd that little attention has been paid to the

1 William S. Hanna, Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics (Stanford, 1964), 27.
artistry of those written works in which Franklin promoted his benevolent schemes. Franklin’s interest in effective writing is well documented. His early essay, “On Literary Style,” sets forth the neoclassic principles of clarity, brevity, and order which underlie his prose. His Autobiography details the pains Franklin took to become “a tolerable English Writer.” In his “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania,” Franklin actually embodies his principles and methods of good writing in an educational plan for the colony. Consistently Franklin’s works on writing stress the common eighteenth-century assumption that all writing is didactic and “That no Piece can properly be called good, and well-written, which is void of any Tendency to benefit the Reader, either by improving his Virtue or his Knowledge.” This statement is more than a truism. Franklin’s own writing seeks to persuade his readers to accept his version of the virtuous and the useful. The philanthropic papers, which represent Franklin’s attempt to move readers to direct action, served as his own training ground in the art of persuasive writing.

Franklin made his reputation as a promoter of benevolent projects during the 1730s, 1740s, and early 1750s. During these decades the factional divisions of Pennsylvania politics offered grave challenges to a writer seeking to move his readers to virtuous and useful action. The Quakers continued to control the Pennsylvania Assembly and dominated Pennsylvania politics, but they were numerically a minority in Philadelphia and increasingly in the colony as a whole. The Quakers counted upon the support of German settlers, who welcomed the peace, prosperity, and religious toleration which Quaker policies

4 Franklin, Papers, II:397-421.
5 Ibid., I:331.
6 See Bruce Granger, Benjamin Franklin: An American Man of Letters (Ithaca, N.Y., 1964) for a capable general account of Franklin’s relationship to the eighteenth-century didactic tradition.
had brought the colony.\(^8\) Since the Quakers, despite their minority status, remained the politically dominant as well as the wealthiest group in Pennsylvania, Franklin, as clerk of the Assembly and as promoter of civic improvements, needed to assure their tolerance of and, when possible, their support for his plans.

For his projects to succeed, however, Franklin also needed support from the Proprietors and their followers. The Quaker dominated Assemblies fought bitterly with the colony’s Proprietors and their appointed governors over the rights of the Assembly and the prerogatives of the Proprietors. Thomas Penn, when he became sole Proprietor, wanted to redress what he perceived as an imbalance of political power by increasing the executive influence so that the Governor shared in decisions made by the Assembly, such as the disposition of public money. From Penn’s perspective at the English court, the abandonment of a mixed government in favor of a system in which the legislature dominated the executive was intolerable, and he could not understand why the better sort, the men of property, did not join his representatives in redressing this imbalance.\(^9\) The Quakers, however, handily repulsed the attempts of Proprietary politicians to undermine their support by German and Scots-Irish settlers and maintained control of the colony’s politics. Indeed, the Quakers had a virtual monopoly of popular issues, including popular control over government, peaceful relationships with the Indians, protection of property rights, and development of local communities. Tainted as followers of the colony’s landlord and unpopular as supporters of executive power, the Proprietary party was unable to make inroads into Quaker support until the French and Indian War created a crisis over Quaker pacifism, and even then the Proprietary gains were limited and transient.\(^10\) Thus, the Proprietary party remained politi-

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\(^8\) Bridenbaugh, 16-19; Hanna, 13-14.


\(^10\) Alan W. Tully, “Ethnicity, Religion, and Politics in Early America,” Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 107 (Oct. 1983): 491-536. Tully argues that real change did not come to Pennsylvania politics until the 1760s. Wellenreuther more traditionally sees the 1750s as the beginning of the disruption of the Quaker hegemony, ascribing it to the breaking of Quaker uniformity over issues posed by the French and Indian War. Both
cally weak during the years in which Franklin launched his philanthropic projects. Nonetheless, it included wealthy and influential men, and through its leaders' access to the Governors and the Proprietors, it had control over Proprietary patronage. Consequently, if Franklin's benevolent plans were to succeed, he needed support from members of both political factions. He also needed support from the diverse, often hostile ethnic and religious groups which comprised the population of Pennsylvania and influenced its politics—Anglican and Quaker English, New and Old Light Scots-Irish Presbyterians, and Lutheran, Reformed, and Sectarian Germans. As a persuasive writer Franklin faced the challenge of crafting essays which would appeal to those groups likely to support his projects while not alienating other factions.

Franklin's philanthropic efforts were aided by the political stance he assumed in Philadelphia during the 1740s and early 1750s. Until 1755-56 Franklin remained (except for the Hemphill affair) largely above the political fray. On the rare occasion when he did take a clear political position, as in supporting an increase in paper money or proposing the formation of a militia, he insisted that he was motivated primarily by his concern for the welfare of the colony. He maintained friendships with members of both the Assembly and the Proprietary parties. He tended to oppose Quaker pacifism but to support the Quakers' attacks on Proprietary prerogatives. As far as religion was concerned, although Franklin began his career in Philadelphia as a member of a Presbyterian congregation and ended it as a member of an Anglican one, he was widely known to be a free-thinker who disdained doctrinal disputes or, as he put it, who was "an honest Man, of no Sect at all." In the charged religious at-

agree, however, that from the 1730s to the mid-1750s the united front presented by the Quakers and the extent of their support from other settlers made Pennsylvania almost a one-party state.


12 The Hemphill controversy seems to have thrown Franklin temporarily off balance, for his support of the unorthodox Presbyterian became increasingly shrill. See Melvin H. Buxbaum, Benjamin Franklin and the Zealous Presbyterians (University Park and London, 1975), 76-115.

13 Franklin, Autobiography, 194.
mosphere of his time, it was a political advantage for Franklin to avoid being tied too closely to any one religious sect. In essence Franklin presented himself as an independent, interested in the good of the community as a whole rather than devoted to a particular religious or political group. In time this position gained him the political support of similarly minded people. Some historians have viewed Franklin's political ambiguity during this period as a reflection of his naïveté; others have seen it as revealing political opportunism.

Whatever were Franklin's private motives, he seems to have been trying publicly to live up to the eighteenth-century image of the ideal, civic-minded citizen who follows principle rather than faction. Throughout his career Franklin repeatedly expressed his desire to found a "party of virtue" which would transcend political, ethnic, and religious divisions. His behavior before 1755, when the intensity of political infighting forced Franklin to choose sides, suggests that he was attempting to act in accordance with this ideal, to be an independent force for the public benefit. No doubt he enjoyed discovering that his behavior also brought him personal prosperity and civic reputation.

It was probably inevitable that Franklin eventually had to choose sides, that he became a leader of the Assembly party and a foe of the Proprietors and their supporters. What surprises is Franklin's ability to act for more than a decade as an independent agent who could gain support for benevolent projects from members of diverse, often hostile, groups. Many of Franklin's campaigns—especially those for the Academy and the Hospital—were freighted with potential political dangers. For example, since the Quakers in Philadelphia already possessed excellent schools, including both English and Latin schools for boys, Quaker interest in a non-sectarian Academy was minimal. Indeed, such an Academy would clearly benefit the Quak-

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14 Bridenbaugh, 21; Rothermund, 59-61.
15 Hanna sees Franklin as initially naïve; Rothermund views his actions as opportunistic. Both views seem to reflect twentieth-century assumptions about political motivation and behavior. See Hanna, 48-89; Rothermund, 84-86.
16 Paul W. Conner has argued that benevolence as a social ideal transcending self-interest is a dominant note in Franklin's thought throughout his career. See Poor Richard's Politicks: Benjamin Franklin and His New American Order (New York, 1965), 22.
17 For a thorough account of Quaker views of education and of their schools, see Frost, The Quaker Family in Colonial America, 1-128.
ers’ main rivals, the Anglicans and Presbyterians. Consequently, in his campaign for the Academy Franklin needed to gain the support of both Anglicans and Presbyterians, factions which frequently feuded with each other, without alienating the Quakers. On the other hand, for the Hospital Franklin needed the support of members of all denominations, but particularly of the Quaker group which controlled the Assembly and which included numerous wealthy individuals, and he succeeded admirably in gaining its support. Franklin’s personal diplomacy undoubtedly played an important part in the success of his balancing act, but equally crucial were the written appeals for his projects. In them Franklin developed a rhetorical voice which mirrored the independent image he projected in public life.

Franklin learned how to use words to inspire people to action by developing his written campaigns for civic improvement, campaigns which laid the groundwork for his later mastery of political persuasion. Writing in support of philanthropic projects, Franklin gradually developed the persona which lies behind much of his writing—the well-intentioned man who seeks only to assist his fellows. In these pamphlets he also learned to adapt his persona, tone, style, and structure to fit varying situations and audiences.

Equally important, the philanthropic works shed light on an apparent paradox in Franklin’s persuasive writing. In his works Franklin consistently presents

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18 The peace between Presbyterians and Anglicans did not long outlast the Academy’s founding and was fatally shattered when William Smith became its head. For a detailed account of the events which forced Franklin from a position of leadership and split the school, see Buxbaum, 153-184. The Quakers gave almost no support to the Academy from the beginning and eventually became hostile to it. See Bridenbaugh, 42-43.

19 Rothermund, 119-120.

20 J. A. Leo Lemay identifies the “amicus humani generis” as Franklin’s over-riding self-characterization in the Autobiography and perceptively discusses its relationship to the variety of personae Franklin adopts in that work. See “Benjamin Franklin,” in Major Writers of Early American Literature, ed. Everett Emerson (Madison, Wisc., 1972), 240-42. Richard Amacher argues that Franklin’s ability to project himself as a good man was one of his strongest talents as a persuasive writer. See Benjamin Franklin (New York, 1962), 82.

21 James A. Sappenfield offers the most extensive analysis of Franklin’s skill in fitting his masks to his purposes and presents brief but perceptive analyses of Franklin’s rhetorical techniques in his early journalism, but he scants the philanthropic pamphlets. See A Sweet Instruction: Franklin’s Journalism as a Literary Apprenticeship (Carbondale, 1973), esp. 8-16. Melvin Buxbaum also stresses Franklin’s talents as a rhetorician, claiming that Franklin used his talents in the Autobiography to conceal unpleasant truths about himself and America. See Buxbaum, esp. 1-38.
himself as a lover of humanity who altruistically seeks the good of society as a whole; almost as consistently he appeals to his fellow citizens' selfish interests as well as their altruistic ones. Franklin strives to harmonize these roles, so that they appear complementary rather than contradictory. The philanthropic pamphlets reveal Franklin's development of his characteristic double perspective, a strategy through which he can argue that actions which benefit humanity will also benefit individual readers. Perhaps Franklin's most controversial achievement as a persuasive writer is his ability to join selfless and selfish appeals in a seamless whole, so that his readers can simultaneously enjoy the luxury of moral approval and the benefits of practical gain.

Franklin's first writings on behalf of philanthropic projects reveal his attempts to adapt the sharply defined personae of his early essays to philanthropic purposes. The speakers in "Of Slippery Sidewalks" (Pennsylvania Gazette, Jan. 11, 1732/3) and "On Protection of Towns from Fire" (Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb. 4, 1734/5) are old men whose experiences lead them to give good advice to their neighbors. The crotchety speaker in "Of Slippery Sidewalks" is clearly related to such humorous figures as Silence Dogood and Martha Careful, and because the speaker is essentially a comic figure, the reader is more likely to laugh at his crankiness than respect his advice. The speaker of "On Protection of Towns from Fire" is more benevolent and less eccentric, but he still lacks stature, even though he is disinterested. These

22 Numerous critics have seen only the self-interested side of Franklin's writings on virtue. Although D. H. Lawrence's attack in Studies in Classic American Literature is the most notorious indictment of Franklin's values, Lawrence was merely giving individual expression to a well established complaint. In the first book-length study of Franklin as a writer, John Bach McMaster, after considerable praise for Franklin's literary achievements, concludes that Franklin was unfit to teach morality because his ethics amounted simply to the prudential proverbs of Poor Richard. See Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters (1887; rpt. Boston, 1982), 278.


24 As Sappenfield points out, Franklin chooses to write not as a merchant, who would have much to lose in case of fire, but as a disinterested old man. See Sappenfield, 68.
These pieces also reveal, however, that Franklin already knows that effective persuasive writing must unite appeals to self-interest and altruism. In "Of Slippery Sidewalks" Franklin suggests that sanding sidewalks will increase business as well as preserve one's neighbors' limbs, and in "On Protection of Towns from Fire" he draws a vivid picture of the dangers to which an unprotected town is exposed: "And it has pleased God, that in the Fires we have hitherto had, all the bad Circumstances have never happened together, such as dry Season, high Wind, narrow Street, and little or low Water: which perhaps tends to makes [sic] us secure in our Minds; but if a Fire with these Circumstances, which God forbid, should happen, we should afterwards be careful enough." Franklin also knows that well-intentioned exhortation will not by itself be effective; consequently, he carefully details the steps the town can take to reduce the danger from fire.

Although "Of Slippery Sidewalks" and "On Protection of Towns from Fire" show Franklin's experimentation with personae and arguments to support his philanthropic projects, the first philanthropic piece, published as a broadside, that shows Franklin in full control of persuasive strategies is "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge" (May 14, 1743). Written to support Franklin's campaign for the establishment of a philosophical society in America, this essay shows Franklin's careful calculation of his readers' reaction to his proposal by his developing the voice and persuasive strategies to overcome his readers' scepticism. Franklin's proposal that a scientific society be founded in the raw North American colonies must have seemed quixotic to many of his readers. Where would the learned men, the leisure, and the money be found? Would such efforts not mean a waste of effort which could better be spent on practical matters? Franklin's "Proposal" is designed to silence such objections—to con-

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21 Franklin, Papers, II:14.

26 Franklin's care to provide detailed, thorough plans reflect the practice of Daniel Defoe's Essay on Projects, which Franklin claimed was one of the inspirations of his efforts to do good.
vince potential supporters, first, that his scheme is desirable, and second, that it can be accomplished.

In this piece Franklin carefully follows his own advice that a persuasive writer should begin with notions generally agreed upon and move gradually to controversial propositions. He opens the essay by describing the English possessions in North America, emphasizing the richness of this barely explored continent as a source of scientific discovery. After establishing the proposition that a new land offers a rich field for scientific investigators, Franklin counters the first two objections his readers are likely to raise. He argues that with the first settling of the colonies completed and with wealth increasing, many rich, learned men exist who are capable of making scientific discoveries of benefit to the colonies and to humanity. With one bold assertion Franklin answers two potential criticisms of his scheme: that no scientific men exist in the colonies and that the time and effort expended on scientific investigation should be put to more practical uses.

Having argued the usefulness and practicality of his proposal, Franklin attempts to demonstrate the need for a philosophical organization. His basic point is that, because educated men are scattered throughout the colonies, their valuable discoveries are never communicated and are thus lost to mankind. What the colonies need is a corresponding society to enable philosophers to exchange and test their ideas and discoveries. Only after he has shown that North America is a suitable place for scientific research, argued that learned men capable of making useful discoveries exist in the colonies, and demonstrated the need for communication among them does Franklin propose specifically that a philosophical society be established to facilitate the exchange of ideas.

The proposal for a philosophical society shows Franklin extending the persuasive techniques he employed in earlier essays. As in his letter on the prevention of fire, he makes his proposal as detailed as possible. Knowing that a simple appeal for a philosophical society may command assent but no action, he outlines the society’s organization, describes its activities, and sets forth its basic rules. In effect

27 Franklin, Papers, II:380.
28 Ibid.
he writes a constitution for a non-existent organization. Because the success of the society will depend upon its corresponding members, Franklin attempts to de-fuse fears that it will be dominated by Philadelphia residents. He suggests that Philadelphia is a suitable seat for the group because of its central location and fine library, but he insists that corresponding members will be consulted on all important matters, that minutes of all meetings will be sent to them, and that they will receive copies of all valuable papers. 29 Franklin also flatters the vanity of potential members. To inspire visions of international fame in his readers' minds, he suggests that the society will correspond with the Royal Society and the Dublin Society and that the most valuable papers will be published. By serving mankind his readers will also be serving themselves. Franklin waits until he has enumerated all of the advantages of membership in the society to mention the required dues. Obviously he intends the advantages to appear so numerous that the dues will seem insignificant.

The manipulation of the persona in "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge" marks a clear advance over Franklin's earlier persuasive works. Franklin encounters in this essay the same problems he confronts throughout his career as a persuasive writer. He must create a knowledgeable, trustworthy speaker, and he must de-fuse his readers' suspicions that the promoter of the scheme seeks personal glory. In this essay Franklin hits upon the device which he later recommends in his Autobiography. Instead of creating a fictitious persona or speaking directly as Ben Franklin, printer, he writes as the spokesman of a group of altruistic philosophers who wish to promote human knowledge and well-being. This device offers Franklin two advantages. As the product of a group of philosophers his proposal gains more credibility than an invented character could provide, and since the author is merely the spokesman for several well-meaning citizens he cannot easily be accused of self-promotion. 30 Franklin steps forward only when he offers to serve as secretary of the association—

29 Ibid., II:381-382.
30 In adopting this stance Franklin was reflecting the truth of the matter because the original proposal for a scientific society or academy came from John Bartram. See the headnote to "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge," Papers, II:378-380. But Franklin obviously recognized the rhetorical advantages of speaking as the voice for a group of benevolent men, since he used this device in later philanthropic essays.
a position which Franklin describes as onerous, powerless, and thankless.\footnote{Franklin, \textit{Papers}, II:383.}

The "Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge" is the first philanthropic piece which shows Franklin in firm control of every aspect of persuasive writing. The individualized personae of the earlier letters have been replaced by a disinterested voice that speaks as the representative of a group of altruistic philosophers. Franklin sacrifices wit and flair to gain credibility. This piece also reveals Franklin's control of persuasive organization and his ability to unite appeals to his readers' altruistic and selfish impulses. Franklin shows his fellow philosophers that by joining the American Philosophical Society they will not only be promoting their own studies and increasing their own prestige, they will also be disseminating knowledge, serving the colonies, and improving the lot of humanity. The "Proposal" succeeded in arousing interest in the philosophical society, even though the fortunes of that body later ebbed.

The skills which Franklin perfected in the "Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge" served him equally well in his two most ambitious philanthropic projects—the campaigns to establish the Philadelphia Academy and the Pennsylvania Hospital. The persuasive pieces written to support these institutions illustrate the flexibility of Franklin's rhetorical strategies. Each of these campaigns posed unique problems for Franklin as a persuasive writer, and in response he carefully adapted his personae, argumentative structures, and style to fit his occasion and audience.

Franklin fired the first shot in his campaign for a Philadelphia academy in a short piece entitled "On the Need for an Academy" published as an introduction to a translation of Pliny's treatise on education (\textit{Pennsylvania Gazette}, August 24, 1749).\footnote{Ibid., III:385-386.} The structure of this work is almost identical to that of the "Proposal." Franklin opens by stating that the early settlers of the colony were unable to establish academies and colleges because the necessities of life demanded their time and attention. After beginning with a proposition most of his readers will accept, he then argues that with increased wealth and leisure many citizens would give their children good
educations if such could be had cheaply and safely at home. This would benefit the colony, for every country needs educated leaders. Finally Franklin appeals to his readers' prejudices by arguing that the increase in foreign immigrants, ignorant of local laws and customs, creates an especial need for an Academy to train informed citizens. In this short piece designed to prepare the ground for a later proposal, Franklin accomplishes much. He exculpates his readers' ancestors from the charge of neglect for not establishing schools, but implies that the citizens will be remiss if they do not set one up now. He establishes a need and places the responsibility for filling it on the shoulders of his readers. By arguing that the entire colony will benefit from good leadership, he counters the objection that only those with eligible children will gain from an Academy. Lest these arguments fail, he appeals to his readers' fears of foreign influence by presenting the proposed Academy as a bastion of English law and custom. After drawing upon his readers' hopes and fears for the colony, he announces that a proposal for such an Academy will be forthcoming, and he gives the suggestion the weight of classical authority by including Pliny's treatise stressing the virtues of a local education. As was the case with the proposal for a philosophical society, Franklin presents the project as the brainchild of a group of public-spirited gentlemen.

In the opening round of the campaign for a Philadelphia Academy Franklin simply follows the procedures which succeeded in his effort to form a Philosophical Society. Moreover, in its broad outlines Franklin's major written piece supporting the Academy, the "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania," also adheres to his proven formula for success. As Hornberger has pointed out, Franklin begins by adopting the pose of a humble seeker of advice in order to buttress a scheme which he knew would be unpopular.33 He presents the proposals to solicit the advice of those experienced in education and claims that they have already received the assent of many public-spirited gentlemen. As usual Franklin begins with non-controversial matters, such as the Academy's organization, and moves in a logically ordered, detailed series of steps to more contro-

33 Theodore Hornberger, Benjamin Franklin, Univ. of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 19 (Minneapolis, 1962), 27-29.
versial issues, such as the curriculum. However, one major difference from Franklin’s practice in earlier persuasive essays is immediately apparent in the “Proposals.” He includes in the introduction a list of educational authorities, and he buttresses almost every suggestion he makes with quotations from these authorities. Franklin is willing to sacrifice readability because, as Hornberger suggests, he knows his educational scheme will be unpopular with the colony’s leaders and he needs authoritative support. For this scheme to succeed Franklin has to gain financial backing from wealthy, educated gentlemen and at least tolerance from local ministers, even though his plan slights traditional training in Greek, Latin, and theology, stressing instead the importance of the practical arts and sciences. Knowing that this scheme will offend those people whose assistance he most needs, Franklin uses his rhetorical skill to make it palatable to his readers. To counter tradition he brings forth a host of educational theorists, lists their qualifications, and quotes them for support whenever he makes an unconventional suggestion about the Academy’s curriculum. The essay’s pedantic but persuasive display of knowledge about the principles of education is designed to silence objections that the proposal is the irresponsible product of an illiterate printer.

Franklin also takes special care to establish common ground with his readers. Knowing his curriculum will seem radical to many, he begins by flattering local pride through a discussion of the advantages of Philadelphia as a site for an Academy, and he attempts to move his readers’ emotions by picturing the pleasures of fathering young minds. Most significant, however, is Franklin’s approach to the controversial core of his curriculum. The organization of the essay echoes the organization of the curriculum. As Franklin wishes his teachers to begin with subjects whose use is immediately evident to the students and move to more abstruse subjects by showing their connections to the practical studies, so he begins his essay discussing easily accepted

34 Franklin, Papers, III:397.
35 Hornberger, 27-29.
36 In the introduction to the “Proposals” Franklin lists his educational authorities—Milton, Locke, Francis Hutcheson, Obadiah Walker, Mons Rollin, and Dr. George Turnbull—and details their qualifications as authorities on education. He made one mistake. Franklin believed that the “Dialogues on Education” from which he quotes was by Francis Hutcheson, whereas it was actually written by David Fordyce. See Franklin, Papers, III:397-398.
notions and gradually draws his readers into sharing his vision of education. Franklin strives to minimize the radical features of his scheme by presenting his system of education as a self-evident construction. Basing the curriculum upon subjects which appear immediately useful and agreeable but which are not at the heart of the traditional curriculum, English and history, he shows that a study of these areas naturally leads both to more traditional subjects, such as oratory and logic, and even to less traditional ones, such as the natural sciences and mechanic arts. Implicit in Franklin’s curriculum is a unified theory of knowledge. His explanation of the order of study is designed to reveal the relationships among the various fields of study and to establish the relative importance of such subjects as the new science and the classical curriculum. Franklin seeks to lead his readers step by step into agreement with his view of the order of things. He uses his educational authorities to reinforce his carefully patterned exposition.

Only at the conclusion of the proposals does Franklin reveal the moral principles upon which his proposal is founded. He states that the ultimate aim of education is the increase of true virtue. But Franklin defines true virtue very carefully: “The idea of what is true Merit, should be often presented to Youth, explain’d and impress’d on their Minds, as consisting in an Inclination join’d with an Ability to serve Mankind, one’s Country, Friends and Family; which Ability is (with the Blessing of God) to be acquir’d or greatly encreas’d by true Learning; and should indeed be the great Aim and End of all Learning.”37 This seemingly innocuous statement is in fact one of the boldest strokes in Franklin’s proposal because of what it omits. Reasserting Franklin’s often repeated belief that true virtue consists in serving mankind and arguing that true education increases the desire and capability for such service, the proposal makes only passing reference to religion. Franklin de-emphasizes religion because he wants his school to avoid the snares of religious controversy. He merely refers a few times to the importance of public worship and the improvements wrought by Christianity. In a footnote Franklin tries to head off criticism by claiming that he is actually saying the

37 Ibid., III:419.
end of education is the service of God, because doing good to man is the only service of God in our power and imitating His beneficence is our only way of glorifying Him. Knowing that few will be persuaded by his equation of good works with the service of God, Franklin ingeniously supports his argument with a series of carefully selected quotations from educational authorities, a series which begins with a quotation from Milton. Using Milton to argue against the importance of religious training in education is one of Franklin's most skillful rhetorical sleights-of-hand.

"The Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania" are finally most notable for the skill with which Franklin disguises his boldness. Fully aware that the substance of the proposals runs counter to the ingrained beliefs of those people whose support he most requires, Franklin designs them to appear as safe and respectable as possible. He also uses the faceless voice which marks all of the mature philanthropic papers. The author, identified only obliquely in the request that suggestions be sent to B. Franklin, printer, is the soul of modesty. He offers only a paper of "Hints" for founding an Academy. Although it has been approved by "public spirited gentlemen," they want expert advice before proceeding. In fact the "Hints" consist of a complete plan for a school which departs radically from traditional educational practices, but at every step the author shows that his plan is based upon the structure of knowledge itself and the processes of learning. Moreover, each of his innovations is approved by established educational authorities. Franklin uses his persuasive art to make an unpopular plan palatable.

Later appeals for support for the Academy reveal Franklin's ability to alter his arguments to suit his audience while holding firm to his basic purpose. Writing in the "Paper on the Academy" to gain the

38 Ibid., III:419-421.
39 Franklin could be arrogant; he overstepped himself here. Certainly he failed to satisfy his friend George Whitefield, who wrote in response to Franklin's educational proposals: "[Your plan] is certainly well calculated to promote polite literature, but I think there wants a liquid Christi in it, to make it so useful as I would desire it might be. It is true, you say, the youth are to be taught some public religion, and the excellency of the Christian religion in particular: but methinks this is mentioned too late, and too soon passed over." Whitefield then insists that Christianity should be at the center of a proper education. See Franklin, "From George Whitefield," Papers, III:467-468.
city council's financial support, he adds several strategies. First, by stressing the altruism of the trustees and the amount of money they have given the school, he shows popular support for the school. Then he repeats the prudential arguments that it will be cheaper and safer to educate children at home than abroad and that the colony needs educated leaders. However, Franklin also adds two new arguments: the school will qualify poor students to become country school masters, freeing the back settlements from the necessity of employing dangerous, vicious foreigners, and it will bring revenue from neighboring colonies into the city. Speaking to the city council Franklin emphasizes money, morality, and cheap schoolmasters. As a practical man he tailors his arguments to fit his audience; however, his basic convictions remain unchanged. When his plans for an English education were gradually subverted by the provost and the other trustees, he withdrew bitterly from active participation in the affairs of the Academy; and in extreme old age he attempted once again to revive the English school.

Franklin's disappointment at the transformation of the Academy into a traditional school was mitigated by the success of his other pet project, the Pennsylvania Hospital. The campaign for the hospital posed a different set of challenges for Franklin. Its outlines are well known because of Franklin's account in the *Autobiography*. A Dr. Thomas Bond attempted to raise subscriptions for a charitable hospital,

41 Franklin's bitterness is apparent in his letter "To Ebenezer Kinnersley" (London, July 28, 1759). He writes "For before I left Philadelphia, everything to be done in the Academy was privately preconcerted in a Cabal without my Knowledge or Participation and accordingly carried into Execution. The schemes of Public Parties made it seem requisite to lessen my Influence wherever it could be lessened. The Trustees had reap'd the full Advantage of my Head, Hands, Heart and Purse, in getting through the first Difficulties of the Design, and when they thought they could do without me, they laid me aside." *Papers*, VIII:415-417. Franklin's final attempt to re-establish the English school is his "Observations Relative to the Intentions of the Original Founders of the Academy of Philadelphia" (June, 1789). In this piece Franklin uses the minutes of the Academy to prove that, against the wishes of the public, the trustees of the Academy consistently neglected and finally attempted to destroy the English school in defiance of the Academy's original constitution and the desires of its founders. Franklin died before giving this piece to the school's trustees and nothing came of it, but it shows that Franklin's educational views remained consistent throughout his life. See Benjamin Franklin, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Albert Henry Smyth (New York, 1905), X:9-31.
but he was continually refused when potential subscribers learned that he had not consulted Franklin. Even after Franklin joined in
the scheme, he and Bond were unable to secure enough donations
to support the hospital. The sponsors then asked the Pennsylvania
Assembly for aid, but the Assembly was reluctant to support the
project because it feared that physicians' fees would consume the
endowment, that the hospital would benefit only Philadelphia resi-
dents, and that even the city's residents did not fully support the
scheme. To counter the first objection Franklin persuaded three phy-
sicians to donate their services to the hospital, and to counter the
second two objections he devised a matching funds scheme in which,
if the hospital's supporters raised £2000, the Assembly would donate
the same amount. The plan worked.\(^42\)

In this campaign Franklin faced two different audiences and two
different challenges. He had first to persuade the Assembly that it
should support the hospital. Then he had to stir up enthusiasm for
a purely charitable scheme among the people, especially among the
wealthy who were least likely to benefit from it. The first written
document of importance is the "Petition to the House of Represen-
tatives."\(^43\) Since the nature of the formal petition determines its
persona and strongly influences its style, the arguments Franklin uses
are of most interest. Franklin attempts to demonstrate that the es-
establishment of a charity hospital will benefit the entire province, not
merely the poor of Philadelphia. He opens by claiming that the
lunatics wandering in the province are a terror to their neighbors.
He draws upon the Assembly's desire to maintain order by implying
that these lunatics present a threat to public peace and security. Having
raised this frightening spectre, Franklin turns to the Assembly's second
serious concern—money. He argues that not having a charity hospital
actually costs the province money. The lunatics waste their own and
their family's substance; the poor afflicted by other types of diseases
also fail to recover and become useful citizens because they fail to
receive proper care. If proper treatment were available they could
recover and support themselves and their families. So the failure to
build a charity hospital is, Franklin implies, false economy. He con-

\(^{42}\) Headnote to the "Appeal for the Hospital," Papers, IV:109-110.

\(^{43}\) Franklin, Papers, V:285-286.
cludes by shrewdly pointing out that since the Assembly has seen fit to show concern for indigent strangers (an apparent reference to the almshouse) the petitioners hope that equal concern will be shown for the province's inhabitants. This last remark seems to contain a warning that failure to support the hospital could become a political issue.

Franklin's skill is apparent in the nature and structure of these arguments. Even though the petition asks for charity for the diseased poor, he stresses the ways in which the hospital will benefit the entire province. He transforms an altruistic act into a prudential one by suggesting that the hospital will benefit all. The arguments are also carefully ordered. Franklin begins with the attention-getting picture of lunatics terrorizing the province; then he moves to monetary concerns; and he concludes with a political jibe. Franklin knows his audience and designs the petition to play upon the Assembly's open and hidden concerns.

When the "Petition" is compared to Franklin's public appeal for the hospital, Franklin's careful tailoring of his style to his audience becomes apparent. Franklin published the "Appeal for the Hospital" in the Pennsylvania Gazette in two parts on August 8 and 15, after the Petition had passed the Assembly and the matching funds bill had been approved. The "Appeal" differs from Franklin's other philanthropic writings in three important respects: the emphasis of the arguments used, the character of the persona who speaks throughout, and the style in which it is written.

The central differences between the arguments Franklin uses in the "Appeal for the Hospital" and those of his earlier persuasive pieces spring from the unique situation Franklin confronts. Because only the poor will directly benefit from a charity hospital, Franklin must stress appeals to altruism and Christian duty. There is less room than in the earlier projects for Franklin to show that philanthropy benefits oneself as well as others. Consequently, Franklin in the "Appeal" spends an uncharacteristic amount of time on emotional appeals to his readers' empathy for the sufferings of others and includes frequent reminders of Christ's injunctions to be charitable and references to his compassion for the ill. Striking as the emotional

"Ibid., IV:147-154."
appeals are, they are a fairly obvious attempt by Franklin to adapt his persuasive strategy to the situation.

More interesting is Franklin's valiant, at times rather strained, attempt to persuade his readers that even such an apparently purely altruistic action as founding a charitable hospital will ultimately benefit the readers themselves. Franklin tries to establish common ground by reminding his readers that all mortals, rich and poor alike, are prone to illness and that fortune is mutable. He even suggests that God may punish the selfish by overthrowing their prosperity. In effect Franklin presents altruistic actions as a sort of heavenly insurance policy by which one may protect one's fortune on earth while simultaneously laying up an eternal reward. To buttress spiritual promises and warnings, Franklin argues that the hospital will improve the skills of established physicians and aid in the training of neophytes. Thus the physicians' paying patients will gain the benefits of their physicians' experience with the poor. And, according to his custom, Franklin provides practical details explaining how cheaply the poor can be restored to health and useful labor. The lengths to which Franklin goes to find ways in which the hospital will benefit its supporters suggest that he has limited confidence in the appeal of altruism unless it is yoked to personal benefit.

Simply considered as an argumentative construct the "Appeal" ranks as a tour de force because of the skill with which Franklin calls upon his readers' varied, often conflicting emotions. It reveals Franklin's awareness of the mixture of self-love and social concern in every human endeavor, even religion, and it demonstrates his ability to join appeals to benevolent altruism, Christian duty, pride, practicality, insecurity, and even fear. The difference between this essay and the "Petition to the Assembly" with its emphasis on the practical benefits to the colony offered by the hospital is a mark of Franklin's versatility as a philanthropic pamphleteer.

The voice and style Franklin employs in the "Appeal" offer even more striking evidence of his ability to alter his mask to suit his audience and situation. As in the other mature philanthropic papers, Franklin's speaker remains an anonymous voice, the spokesman for

well-intentioned, benevolent citizens. Yet the voice is different. The speaker of the “Appeal” is a much more emotional man than the speakers of “A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge” and the “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania.” He castigates those who are “void of Humanity” and portrays vividly the “Cries of the Poor and Needy.” The speaker casually uses biblical parables to illustrate his text in places where Franklin would usually insert folksy anecdotes, and he epitomizes his ideas with biblical quotations rather than aphorisms from Poor Richard. Franklin evidently intends to cloak his speaker in the authority of the clergy.

The style of the “Appeal” is appropriate for a member of the clergy. It is not only loaded with scriptural allusions and emotional diction, it also is more formal, more rhetorical than is usual in Franklin’s mature work. Arguing the mutability of human existence, Franklin writes:

We are in this World mutual Hosts to each other; the Circumstances and Fortunes of Men and Families are continually changing; in the Course of a few Years we have seen the Rich become Poor, and the Poor Rich: the Children of the Wealthy languishing in Want and Misery, and those of their Servants lifted into Estates, and abounding in the good Things of this Life. Since then, our present State, how prosperous soever, hath no Stability, but what depends on the good Providence of God, how careful should we be not to harden our Hearts against the Distresses of our Fellow Creatures, lest He who owns and governs all, should punish our Inhumanity, deprive us of a Stewardship, in which we have so unworthily behaved, laugh at our Calamity and mock when our Fear cometh.46

The lengthy first sentence presents a traditional Renaissance trope, fortune’s wheel, in elaborately parallel, balanced, antithetical clauses. The second sentence draws the conclusions from the premises of the first in diction that smacks of contemporary sermons (“our Present State,” “the good Providence of God,” “He who owns and governs all”) using an admonitory structure (“Since then ... how careful we should be”) taken from the instructional sermon. Franklin reinforces the impression of a preacher’s speaking by using “hath” rather

46 Ibid., IV:149.
than his more usual "has" and by inserting biblical references and quotations. The sermonic quality of this prose becomes especially apparent when Franklin suddenly departs from it to revert to his customary pithy, direct style in his discussion of the hospital's financial advantages. The change is rather startling: "The Difference between nursing and curing the Sick in an Hospital, and separately in private Lodgings, with Regard to the Expence, is at least ten to one."47 Although practical matters lead Franklin to abandon the biblical style, he maintains it throughout most of the piece and returns to it at the conclusion.

Franklin adopts the voice of an humanitarian preacher because it suits the occasion. However aware his readers were of the real author of the essay, the preacher's voice allows Franklin to draw subliminally upon the ethos of the ministry, use its rhetoric, and speak with its authority. Since Franklin is manipulating his readers' religious beliefs, even interpreting Christianity for them, he must appear as a Christian authority, not as the worldly-wise Franklin. The ministerial mask also provides Franklin with an established style and structure which he can use for an emotional appeal to his readers' hearts and purses. Faced with a situation in which the pose of the humanitarian citizen is inadequate, Franklin alters his persona in order to make a new set of persuasive strategies available. The persona is an unusual one for Franklin, but it fits the occasion.48 More clearly than any of the other philanthropic papers, the "Appeal" displays Franklin's virtuosity as a writer of persuasive prose.

By the time Franklin finishes the "Appeal" he has developed the persuasive strategies which distinguish his mature work. The philanthropic pamphlets serve as a training ground, enabling Franklin to develop the skills which serve him throughout his long career as a persuasive writer. Especially important is Franklin's achievement in perfecting his distinctive voice or persona. In the early philanthropic essays, such as "Of Slippery Sidewalks," Franklin uses the sharply individualized personae which he adapted from the eighteenth-century

48 It is not the only time Franklin employs this persona. In "A Narrative of the Late Massacres" (Papers, IX:42-69), Franklin adopts an even more emotional stance, but the political implications of this piece put it outside the bounds of this study.
periodical essay. In the later philanthropic papers, however, Franklin develops and experiments with variations upon the less individualized, but ethically more persuasive, neutral voice of the benevolent, well-intentioned citizen who proposes public projects because of his concern for the well-being of mankind. This voice allows Franklin to speak not simply as an individual promoting a private scheme, but rather as a representative of a group of rational, fair-minded, public-spirited men who strive to improve their community. The voice is flexible enough to allow Franklin to color it distinctively for particular persuasive projects. The voice may be sensible, logical, even a bit pedantic, as in the appeals for the Philadelphia Academy; shrewd and practical as in the "Petition to the House of Representatives"; or emotional, altruistic, and subtly clerical as in the public appeals for support of the hospital—but its essence is always the benevolent, good natured man who seeks to help his fellow citizens help themselves.

The voice Franklin develops in the philanthropic papers does not disappear when he turns to other concerns. The political essays reveal Franklin maintaining the persona of the fair-minded, rational, good citizen; even the complex presentation of Franklin as the representative American in the Autobiography is grounded in the persona Franklin develops in the philanthropic papers. Among the later public, persuasive works, only the satires show Franklin apparently abandoning the persona of the good citizen. There is, however, an indirect relationship between Franklin’s characteristic public voice and the individualized personae of the satires. Not only do the mean-spirited, self-serving personae of such satires as “The Sale of the Hessians” seek to cloak their motives in the guise of patriotism and honor; the depth of their moral depravity can frequently be measured by the distance between their values and the values which prompt the speakers in Franklin’s philanthropic works.

As significant as Franklin’s development of his characteristic public voice in the philanthropic papers is his experimentation with persuasive arguments and appeals. In these papers Franklin develops his typical persuasive strategy—a strategy founded upon his dual view of human nature. Convinced that mankind is neither so blatantly selfish as to be moved solely by appeals to self-interest, nor so wholly altruistic as to act simply through sympathy for others, Franklin develops techniques which appeal to both sides of human nature. With increasing subtlety and skill, Franklin argues in the philanthropic papers
that acts which appear only to help a few, such as establishing an educational academy or a charitable hospital, will ultimately benefit almost every member of the community. In his development of persuasive strategies which unite appeals to altruism and self-interest, Franklin succeeds in grounding the public welfare in private acts of justice and generosity. Thus he develops the argumentative methods he later uses to try to persuade Englishmen that the oppression of America is both intrinsically unjust and damaging to English interests. This same strategy also forms the basis for part of the persuasive power of the *Autobiography*, as Franklin demonstrates through his account of his life that virtue is indeed its own reward, but that there is also nothing so likely to make a man’s fortune as virtue.

Franklin grounds his art in his ethics. Whether those ethics are admirable or abhorrent will no doubt continue to be a matter of debate. It is worth stressing, however, that Franklin’s art and ethics did not emerge full-blown when he wrote the *Autobiography*. The philanthropic papers show that throughout his long career as a writer, Franklin gradually developed his persuasive skill and his moral viewpoint.

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