The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

The History of the Giving While Living Ethic

BY BENJAMIN SOSKIS

MAY 2017

"The History of the Giving While Living Ethic" is excerpted from a forthcoming volume on the history of Giving While Living and limited-life philanthropy, made possible by support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, and reprinted with permission of the author.

BENJAMIN SOSKIS is a Research Associate at the Urban Institute's Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy, and the co-editor of *HistPhil*, a web publication dedicated to the history of the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. He is a frequent contributor to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*; his writing on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector has also appeared in the *Washington Post*, *The Atlantic* online, the *New Yorker.com*, the *Guardian*, the *American Prospect*, and *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. He is the co-author of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song that Marches On* (Oxford, 2013), and of "Looking Back at 50 Years of U.S. Philanthropy," commission for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's 50th Anniversary Symposium. He is also a consultant for the history of philanthropy program of the Open Philanthropy Project, jointly funded by Good Ventures and GiveWell. He received his Ph.D. in American history from Columbia University and lives in Washington, DC.

Preface

Chuck Feeney's philanthropy, and that of the foundation he established, The Atlantic Philanthropies, has been defined by two exceptional decisions. On November 23, 1984, Feeney transferred to what was then called the Atlantic Foundation nearly all his personal fortune—mostly shares in Duty Free Shoppers (DFS), which he had co-founded two decades before—a gift valued at between $500 million and $1 billion. Then in January 2002, Atlantic's board, following Feeney's wishes, made a formal commitment to spend all the foundation's assets, by then some $4 billion, in ten to fifteen years time. In December 2016, the foundation made its final grant, bringing the total awarded over 35 years to more than $8 billion. Atlantic will close its doors for good in 2020.

These decisions have come to represent two closely related commitments: the Giving While Living ethic and the embrace of limited-life philanthropy. The two are routinely chronicled as milestones on the same journey and are often conflated in journalistic accounts of Feeney's philanthropy, such that the spend-down process is described as the ultimate fulfillment of "Giving While Living." Yet there is a value in maintaining their distinctness. Each constitutes a certain approach to giving *in time*; each asserts particular beliefs about the timeframes and timespans that should govern philanthropy; each, in turn, can claim its own genealogy and moral foundations. This monograph will outline those genealogies and those foundations, placing each in broad historical context. In doing so, it can help explain how the ideas and practice of "Giving While Living" and limited life philanthropy have fed each other's growth and overlapped in important ways. And it can also highlight the subtle tensions that have developed between the two, which can illuminate the underlying dynamics that shape the ways in which the wealthy give.[1]

1 Tony Proscio, *Winding Down the Atlantic Philanthropies 2001-2009: The First Eight Years* (Duke Sanford School of Public Policy, 2010), 4, 58.

"Giving While Living," as practiced by Feeney and enacted by Atlantic, is more complex than its neat three-word encapsulation would suggest. It is, in fact, an understanding of philanthropic responsibility woven from three intertwining strands. At its most basic, "Giving While Living" makes a transactional and temporal demand on the donor, requiring him or her to commit money to charitable causes before death. This condition can be satisfied quantitatively—with a bank account transfer and a pulse—as Feeney did in November 1984. Beyond this, there is also a qualitative dimension to "Giving While Living," requiring the active engagement of the donor in administering or overseeing the gift. Finally, the ethic carries with it a promotional imperative; "Giving While Living" must be performed in public; it is a charge fulfilled only when passed on to others. Each of these strands can claim its own history; each makes interventions into long-running debates over the responsibilities of wealth. In the case of Chuck Feeney and Atlantic, these strands have converged in powerful ways. But there are also significant tensions between them. In practice, the Giving While Living ethic calls into question the relationship between the quest for personal fulfillment through giving and the pursuit of philanthropic impact, and between the private prerogatives and public mission of the philanthropist.

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Giving While Living as a Transfer of Wealth

Chuck Feeney's commitment to the first, transactional component of "Giving While Living" stems from a deep-seated ambivalence toward wealth. As Harvey Dale, Feeney's college friend who became a trusted legal advisor and the first president of the Atlantic Foundation, once told an associate, Feeney had a "love-hate relationship with money. He likes to make it because it is his scorecard, but he doesn't like to keep it." Duty Free Shoppers, the company Feeney co-founded in 1960, generated profits at an astounding rate, a substantial portion of which were claimed by DFS's four shareholders. Although he was by no means abstemious — he bought houses in the south of France and in Hawaii — he had absorbed enough of the blue-collar Irish-Catholic New Jersey culture of his youth to be uncomfortable with the scale of his mounting fortune. As Dale noted in a 2010 documentary about Feeney, *Secret Billionaire*, "The growth of the disquietude eventually outweighed the pleasure of being able to entertain and bring people together." Even more importantly, by the early 1980s, once it became clear that he had much more money than he needed, he grew preoccupied with how to put that surplus to the "highest and best use."[2]

Feeney came to develop a theory of giving that harnessed this ambivalence to his competitive, entrepreneurial drive. If at first his measure of success hinged on making as much money as possible, it would ultimately shift to giving it away most effectively. He began to read voraciously about different conceptions of the responsibilities of wealth and received an early tutorial in the literature of American philanthropy from Harvey Dale.

2 Conor O'Clery, *The Billionaire Who Wasn't: How Chuck Feeney Secretly Made and Gave Away a Fortune* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007, 2013), 122 (Dale quote); *Secret Billionaire: The Chuck Feeney Story* (2010); Matthew Bishop and Michael Green, *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 42.

One of the central precepts that Feeney developed was an idea that Julius Rosenwald, the early twentieth century Sears, Roebuck philanthropist, called "timeliness." "I have always had the view," Feeney once explained, "that money raised for philanthropy is to be spent at the time that it's raised, or close to it." This idea contained the kernel of his commitment to "Giving While Living." It combined both personal discomfort with holding onto a fortune for too long—a sort of "hot potato" theory of philanthropy—with a belief that the skills and temperament that helped generate a fortune should be tapped expeditiously and applied to that fortune's philanthropic disbursement. It was also premised on the superiority of giving now over giving later, based both on opportunities for learning and the likelihood of social goods compounding over time. "Today's needs are so great and varied," Feeney once wrote, "that intelligent philanthropic support and positive interventions can have greater value and impact today than if they are delayed when the needs are greater."[3]

Feeney's discomfort continued to gnaw at him as the profits brought in by DFS continued to grow. According to Dale, however, Feeney experienced no "eureka moment" or emotional crisis that led to his epic self-dispossession; he traveled along a steady "slope line" toward the realization that great wealth did not mean much to him beyond the good he could do with it for others. Chuck and his then-wife Danielle took an early step in 1978 with the creation of the Davney Fund, a conduit that allowed the couple to make annual gifts anonymously, mostly to the children of DFS employees. But Feeney had begun to think more ambitiously about giving away his entire fortune, and for this he needed a more substantial institution. In 1982, with the guidance of Dale, Feeney created the Atlantic Foundation, headquartered in Bermuda (requiring a special act of the island's parliament), with himself, his wife Danielle and Dale as directors and with $5 million in initial funds. Dale counseled Feeney to utilize the foundation as a "pass-through entity" for a few years, with money being transferred in and then disbursed out, to iron out various logistical and legal wrinkles before lodging the entirety of the DFS shareholding (some 38.75% of the company) and his other investments in it. In its first three years, $15 million passed through the foundation, all but $1 million going to Cornell University, Feeney's alma mater.

Dale made sure that Feeney understood the enormity, and the irrevocability, of his intended plan. Placing the entire share of a substantial business

[3] As Feeney explained to *Forbes* about his reasons for giving away nearly all his wealth, "I concluded that if you hung on to a piece of the action for yourself you'd always be worrying about that piece." Steven Bertoni, "Chuck Feeney: The Billionaire Who is Trying to Go Broke," *Forbes* (October 8, 2012), accessed online at http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevenbertoni/2012/09/18/chuck-feeney-the-billionaire-who-is-trying-to-go-broke/#1841ef9f6049; Julius Rosenwald, "The Burden of Wealth," *Saturday Evening Post* (January 5, 1929), 12; Tony Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012: Focus, Exit, and Legacy* (Duke Sanford School of Public Policy, 2012), 1; Charles F. Feeney to Bill Gates, February 3, 2011.

enterprise into a foundation—this Dale considered an unprecedented move, and he played devil's advocate. But Feeney was undeterred. On Friday, November 23, 1984, the Atlantic Foundation purchased Feeney's DFS shareholding and businesses. With a stroke of a pen, notes his biographer Conor O'Clery, Feeney "had gone from the cusp of billionaire status to someone with a net worth of less than $5 million." He also became the initiator of what was likely one of the biggest single transfers of personal wealth in modern history. Feeney was 53 years old—two decades younger than John D. Rockefeller when he established the Rockefeller Foundation. Feeney had taken one of the most momentous steps in the modern annals of "Giving While Living." Yet his pursuit of the ethic had just begun.[4]

[4] O'Clery, *The Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 102-104, 117; Feeney, interviewed in *Secret Billionaire*; interview with Harvey Dale, October 2, 2015.

CHAPTER II

Deferring Charity till Death: The Pre-Modern History of Timing Charitable Transfers

If Feeney's decision to transfer to Atlantic the vast majority of his wealth marked the culmination of a personal journey stretching back to the streets of his youth in Elizabeth, the act also took its place in a broader history of decisions regarding the timing of charitable gifts. Its two main poles have been the testamentary transfer, taking effect at death, and the *inter vivos* gift, which can be overseen, administered, and enjoyed by a living donor.

Over time, it is difficult to say which has been responsible for more charitable giving. There is, of course, a vast tradition of quotidian almsgiving, the extension of material aid in response to an immediate encounter with suffering, which has mostly passed unremarked through the sieve of historical accounting. Much large-scale *inter vivos* giving was recorded—public documentation and regard was in fact one of such benefaction's primary aims. Greek and Roman culture of antiquity, for instance, encouraged a system of what scholars term civic *euergetism*, in which prominent citizens were expected to make frequent donations that glorified their cities—building public baths or putting on public games—and could expect public honor and enhanced social status in exchange. This was compensation meant to be savored by the living.

Of course, giving was also often undertaken with expectations of returns beyond one's own lifetime, and bequests and legacies often served as the instruments of charitable intent. “Deathbed” charity especially provided an opportunity for spiritual self-reckoning. The perils of damnation that awaited the unrepentant became prominent themes in early Christian teachings, and gifts to the church were held out as one means of averting that fate. In the medieval period, the practice of deathbed giving grew even more common as the Church encouraged Christians close to death to leave their property to ecclesiastical institutions as a means of securing salvation. By the close of the twelfth century, as one historian has noted, most wills “were rendered on the person’s deathbed, with priests in attendance; the presence of the clergy strongly influenced the outcome. The priest’s duty was to remind the testator of the needs of the parish and its poor; often the priest drew up the will himself.” On a more terrestrial level, commentators also appreciated that giving one’s property away at death allowed the testator to make productive use of it during the course of his lifetime. It was, in other words, a less personally taxing system of redistribution.[5]

Yet even as individual religious leaders encouraged testamentary and deathbed giving, there was also a long-running counter-current that looked askance at such practices, especially in comparison to *inter vivos* corporeal works of mercy. There were two primary early critiques of testamentary giving that fed into what can be considered a pre-modern “Giving While Living” ethic. The first was moral. Medieval and Renaissance texts, for instance, warned against “delayed giving” because it signaled an undue attachment to wealth and a diminished capacity for self-sacrifice, and thus did little to inspire others. The other was largely prudential. Since the moment of death’s arrival was unpredictable, in forestalling the settling of one’s charitable commitments, the potential giver ran the risk of leaving one’s charitable affairs intestate.

The trend toward “Giving While Living” has tended to coincide with various movements to rationalize and impose greater discrimination on charitable giving that have crested at several key moments over the last five centuries. Charity reformers in different ages have worried about waste, inefficiency, or lack of strategic focus in predominant modes of giving, and in response have urged philanthropists to become more actively involved in the administration of their benefactions, a calling that cannot be undertaken from the grave—or even, ideally, with the declining faculties of old age.

[5] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 62-64, 439; Suzanne Roberts, “Contexts of Charity in the Middle Ages: Religious, Social, and Civic,” in ed. J.B. Schneewind, *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996), 37, 38; Philippa Maddern, “A Market for Charitable Performances?: Bequests to the Poor and the Recipients in Fifteenth-Century Norwich Wills, in ed. Anne Scott, *Experiences of Charity, 1250-1650* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2015), 81.

The first wave of charity reform occurred after the Reformation, when Protestants sought to distance their own giving from the practices that had predominated under the Catholic Church. An emerging mercantile class began to forge philanthropy into an instrument directed less toward the giver's spiritual condition than toward the betterment of this world.

Historians believe that bequests reached a high point in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but that the eighteenth century brought about a marked decline in posthumous giving, corresponding to a surge in concerns over obsolete or superannuated legacies. As the historian Donna Andrew has written, "The charitable Christian was increasingly being advised to disburse his charity during his lifetime, in order to have greater control over its direction."

The eighteenth-century demotion of the bequest as the preferred mode of giving was reinforced by a prominent strain within the Anglo-American legal tradition that looked suspiciously on transfers of property at the time of death and that regarded the death-bed as the frequent scene of emotional manipulation on the part of ecclesiastical authorities. Aggrieved heirs who believed they had been robbed of their rightful legacy by conniving priests made up a powerful lobby to limit the scope of posthumous giving. Such sentiments helped push passage of the 1736 "Law of Mortmain," which sought to limit the "publick mischief" of "many large and improvident alienations or dispositions made by languishing or dying persons" that Parliament believed to be on the rise. The law therefore required, among other stipulations, that any charitable gift be made at least twelve months before the donor's death, a modest push toward giving while living.[6]

[6] Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 47; Ray D. Madoff, *Immortality and the Law: The Rising Power of the American Dead* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 91; Evelyn Brody, "Charitable Endowments and the Democratization of Dynasty," *Arizona Law Review* 39 (Fall 1997), 903-905.

CHAPTER III

Early American Precedents for "Giving While Living"

Many of these attitudes toward testamentary giving migrated across the Atlantic. In the nineteenth century, the proliferation of voluntary associations in the United States, funded largely by subscription, provided increased opportunities for small-scale "giving while living." Most large-scale benefactions came through bequest, with the front pages of the dailies in the days after a probate hearing of a major estate inaugurating a sort of secular after-life, where a posthumous identity was forged.

But large-scale bequests faced an inhospitable legal landscape in some jurisdictions. After the states' religious disestablishment in the early Republic, fears mounted regarding the accumulation of property within ecclesiastic institutions through testamentary giving. In 1819, when the Supreme Court invalidated a bequest to the Philadelphia Baptist Association, Judge Joseph Story explained the decision by comparing it to the English Mortmain Law of 1736. It was necessary "to prevent undue influence and imposition upon pious and feeble minds in their last moments, and to check that unhappy propensity which sometimes is found to exist under a bigoted enthusiasm, and the desire to gain fame as a religious devotee and benefactor, at the expense of all the natural claims of blood and parental duty to children." In the subsequent decades, several states passed mortmain statutes of their own, which, as legal scholar Ray Madoff explains, "restricted charitable giving by either disallowing charitable bequests in wills made shortly before the donor's death or by prohibiting charitable gifts in excess of a designated fraction of the donor's estate." Even after the Supreme Court, in 1844, resolved some of the objections to the legal legitimacy of charitable bequests, several states, including New York, maintained a restrictive position and continued to set them aside.[7]

Yet, until the final decades of the nineteenth century, only a handful of Americans accumulated enough personal wealth to make large-scale "Giving While Living" practical. The proliferation of such transfers, and the unfolding of a modern movement based on the Giving While Living ethic, came about only with the massive industrial fortunes of the Gilded Age.

Indeed, the mounting social challenges facing the nation in the final decades of the nineteenth century, especially in its cities, encouraged a loosening of restrictive laws toward charitable trusts. Private fortunes represented reservoirs that could be tapped to alleviate poverty, educate citizens, and bolster civic institutions. The controversies involved in the maintenance of the proper balance between regulating and encouraging charitable trusts peaked with the tumult surrounding the Tilden Trust, the bequest made by former New York governor Samuel Tilden of more than $5 million to establish a free library in New York, as well as to promote scientific or educational objects. Tilden's heirs challenged the trust, and in 1891, the New York Court of Appeals invalidated it, citing, among other objections, the indefiniteness of its ends. The decision resulted in a storm of protest and in 1893 the New York legislature passed the Tilden Act, which established a more permissive policy toward charitable trusts, including bequests. Large-scale charitable bequests in fact flowered in the final decades of the nineteenth century and were closely parsed by the press. At the same time, a new corps of philanthropists arose, committed to the cause of scientific charity and to the active warm-blooded management of their benefactions. And so, once again, the timing of philanthropic gifts—whether bestowed during life or at death—became a subject of intense public discussion.[8]

---

[7] See also James Madison's contention that "an omission of the public authorities to limit… the amount of property acquired by [religious corporations], may lead to an injurious accumulation of wealth from lavish donations and bequests prompted by a pious zeal or an atoning remorse." Quoted in S.F.D. Jr., "The Enforcement of Charitable Trusts in America: A History of Evolving Social Attitudes," *Virginia Law Review* 54, no. 3 (April 1968), 445, note 55. Sigmund Diamond, *The Reputation of the American Businessman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 47-48; Brody, "Charitable Endowments and the Democratization of Dynasty, 907; Madoff, *Immortality and the Law*, 91.

[8] Stanley Katz, Barry Sullivan, and C. Paul Beach, "Legal Change and Legal Autonomy: Charitable Trusts in New York, 1777-1893," *Law and History Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1985), 52; S.F.D. Jr., "Enforcement of Charitable Trusts in America," 456-458; Soskis, "Problem of Charity in Industrial America," 274-275; Diamond, *Reputation of the American Businessman*, 61.

CHAPTER IV.

Andrew Carnegie and the "Gospel of Wealth"

Chuck Feeney certainly appreciated that his experience took place within the broader sweep of this history, even if he was not aware of all the precedents that had shaped the Giving While Living ethic. The historical figure who had the greatest effect on him was likely Andrew Carnegie, the Gilded Age Scots-born steel magnate and patriarch of the "Giving While Living" movement.

Feeney and Carnegie were in some respects kindred spirits, though certainly not in all. Both shared an uncertainty, forged in their youth, regarding the moral legitimacy of great personal wealth. (For Carnegie, a family tradition of Scottish republicanism and radical politics played a similarly insurgent role as did Feeney's middle-class Irish-Catholic upbringing). At 33, when Carnegie was a rising railroad executive who had made a few well-timed investments, he vowed to leave business in a few years so that he could dedicate himself to higher pursuits. "The amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry," he scrawled in a note to himself, accompanying a tally of his income. He pledged to cease making any further efforts to increase his wealth and to spend whatever surplus he had each year on "benevolent purposes."

Of course, Carnegie did not follow his own directive; he loved the thrill of boosting profits and of outmaneuvering his rivals too deeply to retire from business, though he considered doing so on many subsequent occasions. He continued at the helm of his steel-making enterprise until he created one of the greatest industrial corporations, and personal fortunes, of the Gilded Age. He also managed to make peace with the "idolatrous" luxuries an "amassing" of such wealth could bring. Whatever doubts he entertained as to the republican legitimacy of his fortune, for instance, did not prevent him from taking immense pleasure in Skibo Castle, the estate in the Scottish Highlands that Carnegie purchased for himself and his family.[9]

[9] Joseph Frazier Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 821.

Philanthropy eased Carnegie's reconciliation to great wealth; it provided a "refuge from self-questioning," as he once wrote. But Carnegie did not just regard great wealth as a personal problem. It was a societal one as well, to which philanthropy also provided a solution, both by justifying it to the public and by providing a channel for wealth to be returned to society, so as to prevent the accumulation of dynastic fortunes. This was the main thrust of Carnegie's famous tract, "The Gospel of Wealth." As Carnegie opened the essay, "The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship." Philanthropy would solve "the problem of rich and poor." It would not eliminate the gap between them entirely, since great concentrations of wealth Carnegie determined to be a salutary fact of nature. Instead, it would provide "ladders upon which the aspiring can rise." It would also legitimate great concentrations of wealth by allowing the millionaire to serve as "a trustee for the poor, intrusted for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself."[10]

[10] Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 730, 790, 812 (quote); Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in Andrew Carnegie, *The "Gospel of Wealth" Essays and Other Writings*, ed. David Nasaw (New York: Penguin, 2006) 1, 12.

Such a neat resolution depended upon wealthy citizens abandoning two traditional means of disposing of personal fortunes, Carnegie insisted. They could not leave fortunes to their families; such an act merely spoiled the next generation. Nor should they bequeath them at death to some charitable cause, for too often this resulted in the money being used in ways that contravened the testator's intent. Carnegie held up a third possibility: surplus wealth should be "administered by its possessors during their lives." Only in this mode could those who had accumulated a fortune apply the talents that had brought them their wealth toward its redistribution. Only in this way could the man of wealth affirm his trusteeship. This view represented a changing attitude toward the responsibilities of wealth in an American context: Stephen Girard's massive charitable bequest in 1831 was roundly celebrated as the consummate act of stewardship. But for Carnegie (although he admired Girard), such timing was not commendable. As Carnegie memorably phrased it, "The man who dies thus rich dies disgraced."[11]

[11] Carnegie, "Gospel of Wealth," 12; Diamond, *Reputation of the American Businessman*, 10-12.

Carnegie's "Gospel" served as the first modern public appeal for wealthy Americans to embrace an ethic of "Giving While Living." It was first published in the *North American Review* in June 1889 as "Wealth"; its famous title was supplied by the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* when it was reprinted there several months later. It sparked a broader discussion in the transatlantic popular press regarding the responsibilities of wealth. Some praised the essay as a bold declaration of noblesse oblige; others pointed out that, premised on the concentration of wealth, it was a fundamentally conservative document. It certainly had a hand in shaping the broader philanthropic culture emerging in the Gilded Age, although the scale of that influence is difficult to determine with any precision.[12]

[12] For more on the reception of the "Gospel of Wealth," see Benjamin Soskis, "The Problem of Charity in Industrial America, 1873-1915" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2010), 214-219.

Yet it is possible that Carnegie's influence over his fellow philanthropists is greater at the start of this century than it was at the turn of the last century. His "Gospel" certainly shaped Feeney's thinking, though likely by affirming, rather than by inspiring, the impulse toward active philanthropic engagement that Feeney had cultivated. After Harvey Dale introduced him to the text, he returned to it repeatedly over the years and kept a copy of it on his desk. Feeney famously shied away from articulating the principles behind his giving; he preferred to point to other writings as proxies for his views. The "Gospel of Wealth" clearly approximated his own unspoken personal creed and he frequently handed it out to friends and associates as a window into his own thinking. He gave his children a copy of the "Gospel" to explain his own transition into a full-time philanthropist; and, as soon as he established his own foundation, he gave all those associated with it a copy of Carnegie's tract.[13]

[13] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 99, 104, 122, 170.

Feeney is by no means alone among contemporary philanthropists in his regard for Carnegie's "Gospel." It "is practically holy scripture for many of today's philanthrocapitalists," note the authors of *Philanthrocapitalism*. Before Warren Buffett pledged to turn over a large part of his fortune to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, he gave Gates a copy of the essay. More recently, the president of the Ford Foundation, Darren Walker, has mined the essay and called for a "'Gospel of Wealth' for the 21st Century."[14]

[14] Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 13; Darren Walker, "Why Giving Back Isn't Enough," *New York Times*, December 15, 2015.

The enduring resonance and contemporary revival of Carnegie's essay stems in part from its ability to express all three strands of the Giving While Living ethic. On one level, the "Gospel" and the model presented by Carnegie himself simply affirm the call for the nation's richest citizens to direct *more* of their wealth to philanthropy during their lifetimes, a quantitatively satisfiable imperative. At his death, when contemporaries tallied Carnegie's major benefactions, the amount reached to over $350 million, more than any other living donor of the age. Carnegie left behind a fortune of a "mere" $30 million, two-thirds of which was bequeathed to the Carnegie Corporation while another large chunk went to fund personal pensions for his close associates and employees. He left no monetary bequest to his wife or daughter (though he did leave them considerable real estate holdings).[15]

[15] Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 1042-1043; David Nasaw, Andrew Carnegie, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006) 801.

The "Gospel" also reflects an appreciation of the educative mission of the philanthropist, the third strand. Carnegie's legacy counsels that the wealthy themselves participate in the public discourse surrounding the responsibilities of wealth (more on this theme below). Perhaps most significantly, in his "Gospel" Carnegie issued a powerful call for the personal engagement of the wealthy in philanthropy, exemplifying the second strand. It championed a secular doctrine of stewardship. If the traditional Protestant notion asserted that wealth was held in trust for God, and thus must be administered with a proper deference to his will, Carnegie suggested that the market, or some social Darwinist mechanism, served a similar function. Those who accumulated money through their own discipline and ingenuity had an obligation to apply their entrepreneurial talents toward its redistribution toward the public good. As Carnegie wrote, the man of wealth must become the "mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves." The explicit assumption was that accumulated wealth was a sure sign of "superior wisdom experience, and ability."[16]

[16] Carnegie, "Gospel of Wealth," 10.

CHAPTER V

The Second Strand of "Giving While Living": Active Stewardship and the Challenge of Timing it Right

In this respect, Feeney is a true disciple of Carnegie, having embraced all three pillars of "Giving While Living." The ethic's full mandate would not have been satisfied by fulfilling only the first strand, through a mere transfer of wealth, as if it could be met with a passive act of dispossession. The "living" mandated by the ethic required, as Carnegie insisted, *active* stewardship—although the precise threshold of donor engagement necessary remains an open and pressing question.

The belief that living donors carry a special philanthropic charge, based on their exceptional entrepreneurial talents and dispositions, lies at the root of a 21st century resurgence of the stewardship ethic. That conviction, for instance, links Feeney to philanthrocapitalism, the contemporary movement which seeks to apply the power of the market toward philanthropic ends; it should come as no surprise that Matthew Bishop and Michael Green, who coined the term in their 2008 book, cite Feeney as a paragon of the movement, calling him "probably the greatest example of philanthrocapitalistic giving to higher education."[17]

The engaged, living donor is such a powerful presence on the contemporary philanthropic scene that it is easy to forget that the figure has until

[17] As Bishop and Green write, "one key ingredient of philanthrocapitalism is the responsibility and willingness of economic winners to… apply to their giving the same talents, knowledge, and intellectual vigor that made them rich in the first place." Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 271. O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 104, 382; Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 144.

recently been the exception. When Waldemar Nielsen, one of the 20th century's most perceptive observers of the philanthropic sector, surveyed the largest foundations in the 1970s and 1980s, he was struck by how little thought many donors seemed to extend to their giving. "Far from being wise, farsighted, public-spirited, purposeful benefactors, many of the big donors set up their foundations if not in a fit of absentmindedness then simply as part of tidying up their affairs at the end of a lifetime devoted to business and the acquisition of wealth," he noted. "In moving from the profit-making to the not-for-profit sphere, they with few exceptions forgot their accumulated organizational skills entirely."[18]

[18] Waldemar A. Nielsen, *The Golden Donors: A New Anatomy of the Great Foundations* (New York: E.P, Dutton. 1985), 18, 19.

These donors, even if they technically gave before death, violated the contemporary "Giving While Living" ethic by neglecting its second strand. The relationship between that strand and the first is based on a relatively straightforward argument about giving in time: because the energy, drive and ingenuity of an entrepreneurial donor are not inexhaustible resources in any given lifetime, a commitment to philanthropy should be initiated before they are significantly depleted. But if such logic discouraged the indefinite postponement of Feeney's philanthropic engagement, it did not mandate a particular starting time. Indeed, even after Feeney turned over the vast majority of his personal wealth to Atlantic, fulfilling that first pillar of "Giving While Living," the foundation did little grant-making; its annual payout rate for its first half decade remained below the five percent mandated for American foundations (given the illiquidity of his stake in DFS, the foundation relied on the dividends that the company paid out). Feeney himself dedicated the vast majority of his time to his business affairs. It was only in the early 1990s, as his ties to Duty Free Shoppers began to fray, and then to sever entirely with the sale of his shares in the company in October 1996 to the luxury goods conglomerate LVMH, that he began to define himself primarily as a philanthropist. This was not an easy transition for Feeney; it required giving up a significant component of his identity, which had long been staked to the *making* of money. At times it represented a real personal sacrifice, a sort of divestment of self, since generating the liquid assets necessary for grants often required selling off businesses into which Feeney had not only invested money, but his own passion and personality as well. As his biographer, Conor O'Clery notes, disposing of the Castleroy Park Hotel, in Limerick, Ireland, was especially difficult for Feeney, since he had overseen its design and construction, had helped nurture it into a successful enterprise and had developed relationships with many executives and employees associated with it.[19]

[19] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 167-168, 317; interview with Christopher Oechsli, April 7, 2015.

This points to a more general truth about "Giving While Living" that is infrequently remarked upon: though it brings personal gratification, it also comes with emotional costs, especially those associated with the assumption of the identity of a full-time philanthropist. As Bill Gates told Charlie Rose during a 2010 interview, "It's a real mind shift if you've been making money. Giving it away is a bit different." Gates had embarked upon this transformation a few years before when, at the age of 52, he decided to leave Microsoft and to dedicate his time and energy entirely to his foundation. He explained the transition as necessary to let new, younger blood into the company, but he also made clear that he had found it increasingly difficult to occupy both positions simultaneously, to serve as head of the software company and of the Gates Foundation.[20]

[20] *Charlie Rose*, June 5, 2010, video accessed online at http://www.charlierose.com/watch/50064709; Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 269.

The "Giving While Living" ethic requires a traversing of the boundaries between entrepreneurship and philanthropy, but it does not spell out a clear path of how, or a definite timeline of when, to do so. One response, with a long tradition behind it, suggests establishing strong lines of demarcation between the identity of wealth creator and of wealth re-distributor. Such an approach often carries the assumption that giving away money is a more elevated vocation than making it, and thus, that the latter enterprise should be dismissed before the former can be embarked upon. This was a common view in the first half of the nineteenth century, when many men of means took on roles as public benefactors only after sloughing off the cares of the counting house. Early retirements were common among the Boston merchant princes from whose ranks the nation's most prominent philanthropists arose.[21]

[21] More recently, energy trader and hedge-fund manager John Arnold retired from finance at the age of 38 to devote himself to giving away his fortune of some $3 billion to philanthropy. As he told *Bloomberg News*, "My life was 100 percent trying to make money in the first phase, then 100 percent trying to do good in the second." Dan Murtaugh, "Giving Back Has Made this 31-year old Retired Billionaire Less Popular," *Bloomberg*, November 18, 2015. Soskis, "The Problem of Charity in Industrial America," 202.

The problem with understanding "Giving While Living" as a form of retirement is that it places a great burden on getting the timing right. When, precisely, should the man of wealth transform himself into the philanthropist? The "Giving While Living" tradition offers little guidance on this question. And the difficulty of arriving at a satisfying answer can forestall the commitment to active philanthropy. Andrew Carnegie, for instance, vowed on several occasions to retire from business, but repeatedly backed away, finding the prospect of making more millions irresistible. Indeed, he believed the responsible man of wealth had an obligation to "increase his revenues." Once he has committed himself to the Gospel of Wealth, "the struggle for more is completely freed from selfish or ambitious taint and becomes a noble pursuit…The more he makes, the more the public gets." The tobacco magnate James Buchanan Duke followed a similar logic in establishing the Duke Endowment less than a year before he died. "I am going to give a good part of what I make to the Lord," he explained "but I can make better interest for Him by keeping it while I live."[22]

More recently, before he had decided to turn over his fortune to the Gates Foundation and a handful of other foundations run by his children, investor Warren Buffett had planned to give his money to philanthropy only after his death. As he explained in an interview with *Fortune* magazine editor Carol Loomis shortly after announcing the pledge, "I always had the idea that philanthropy was important today, but would be equally important in one year, ten years, 20 years, and the future generally. And someone who was compounding money at a high rate, I thought, was the better party to be taking care of the philanthropy that was to be done 20 years out, while the people compounding at a lower rate should logically take care of the current philanthropy." The late hedge fund mogul and philanthropist Robert Wilson rejected Bill Gates's Giving Pledge (discussed later in the monograph) on similar terms. "When I talk to young people who seem destined for great success," he wrote to Gates. "I tell them to forget about charities and giving. Concentrate on your family and getting rich—which I found very hard work….People who do not make money will never become philanthropists. When rich people reach 50 and are beginning to slow down is the time to begin engaging them in philanthropy." But this association of giving with "slowing down" can forestall the moment of transition. Bill Gates has in fact disclosed that one of the reasons why he put off transitioning to a full-time philanthropist was because doing so "forces you to think about your own death."[23]

There is another response to the challenge of timing the transition from wealth accumulator to redistributor, which is to deny its necessity entirely. At nearly every moment of great wealth creation in the United States, those who accumulated the bulk of it have argued that entrepreneurship is itself a form of philanthropy, providing employment, goods and services to the public. In his autobiography, for instance, Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller declared the highest form of philanthropy to be "the investment of effort or time or money, carefully considered with relation to the power of employing people at a remunerative wage, to expand and develop the resources at hand, and to give opportunity for progress and healthful labor where it did not exist before." In fact, he praised businessmen who refused to retire even when they had "acquired a competency" for this reason. Similarly, Henry Ford rejected an ethic of charity, insisting that he

[22] Andrew Carnegie, "The Advantages of Poverty," in *"Gospel of Wealth" Essays*, 50; Duke quoted in Waldemar A. Nielsen, *The Big Foundations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 183.

[23] See also the comments of Bob Miller, one of founding shareholders of DFS, who took a different approach to the wealth that the enterprise brought him than did Feeney. He embraced the demands of high society, spending lavishly on personal luxuries for himself and his family. When pressed, Miller claimed that he planned to pass on most of his fortune to his children so that they can assume responsibility for giving it away. "I think making it and trying to give it away at the same time is almost impossible," he told Feeney's biographer, Conor O'Clery. "You either have to do one thing or the other." O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 304. David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Carol Loomis, "Warren Buffett Gives it Away," *Fortune*, July 13, 2006, accessed online at http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/07/10/8380864/index.htm; Josh Kosman, "Bill Gates told that his charity pledge is 'worthless,'" *New York Post*, January 1, 2014; Gideon Rachman, "Lunch with Bill Gates," *Financial Times*, October 29, 2010, accessed online at https://www.ft.com/content/67672314-e2e0-11df-9735-00144feabdc0.

believed in offering his workers a living wage instead. "No man ever helped another by giving money," he insisted. As a sympathetic biographer noted, "He gives generously to friends and employees, but it is in recognition of services rendered."[24]

[24] John D. Rockefeller, *Random Reminiscences of Men and Events* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1909), 75, 142; Peter Frumkin, *Strategic Giving: the Art and Science of Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 323; Diamond, *Reputation of the American Businessman*, 61; Samuel Marquis, *Henry Ford: An Interpretation* (1923; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), 104.

More recently, the philanthrocapitalist movement has given a boost to such ideas by arguing that market mechanisms can best address the world's most pressing problems. No one embodied such faith in the philanthropic power of business more than the late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. Jobs famously showed little interest in traditional philanthropy, though recently several of his associates have claimed that he made significant donations anonymously. When pressed about his lack of public commitment to philanthropy, Jobs had suggested that giving away money responsibly was so difficult that it would require his full attention, of which he could not in good conscience deprive Apple. As a friend explained to *New York Times* reporter Andrew Ross Sorkin, Jobs came to believe that he could do the most good in the world by building his company, and that "everything else is a distraction." (After his death in 2011 much of Jobs' fortune passed on to his wife, Laurene Powell Jobs, who has become one of the nation's most engaged educational philanthropists). Yet in an online *Harvard Business Review* column, entrepreneur Dan Pallotta echoed Rockefeller in naming Jobs the "world's greatest philanthropist," despite his absence on the honor roll of million dollar donors. "What a loss to humanity it would have been if Jobs had dedicated the last 25 years of his life to figuring out how to give his billions away, instead of doing what he does best," Pallotta remarked, outlining the social good iPads and iMacs have brought the world.[25]

[25] Andrew Ross Sorkin, "The Mystery of Steve Jobs' Public Giving," *Dealbook*, August 29, 2011, accessed online at http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/the-mystery-of-steve-jobss-public-giving; Dan Pallotta, "Steve Jobs, World's Greatest Philanthropist," *Harvard Business Review* online, September 2, 2011, accessed at https://hbr.org/2011/09/steve-jobs-worlds-greatest-phi.html.

Such a line of reasoning represents the greatest contemporary challenge to "Giving While Living"—besides, of course, pure avarice—by doing a sort of end-run around some of the most critical questions posed by the temporal dimensions of philanthropy. But the "Giving While Living" ethic points to an answer, one increasingly embraced by a younger cohort of tech philanthropists and which also runs congruent to the rise of Philanthrocapitalism. By emphasizing the active engagement of the wealthy in the practice of philanthropy, the ethic has underscored the ways in which the same personal traits that have led to wealth accumulation can and should be directed toward giving that wealth away. It thus holds out the possibility of their *simultaneous* application: giving while living while accumulating.

CHAPTER VI

Chuck Feeney, Atlantic, and Entrepreneurial Stewardship

The veneration of entrepreneurship bridges the enterprises of making money and giving it away and also fuels much of the contemporary interest in "Giving While Living." It spans Chuck Feeney's own talents for accumulation and for redistribution, and links his career as a businessman and as a philanthropist.

Indeed, characterizations of Feeney's philanthropic style frequently involved comparisons to his intuitiveness as an entrepreneur. As Feeney himself once explained, "While my approach to philanthropy has surely developed and matured through experience, fundamental guides for me have always been the same methods of working and values that served me well in my business career. Key among these, I believe, is the dynamism, vigilance and informed risk taking inherent in entrepreneurial work, together with priority on good relationships and personal engagement."[26]

[26] Charles F. Feeney to Bill Gates, February 3, 2011.

Much as he would often trust his instincts to take advantage of what he perceived to be an inviting business opportunity, he would also follow his intuition about philanthropic projects that could claim a certain "ripeness" for funding. As his biographer Conor O'Clery notes, "If he saw a good opportunity, either to increase the non-negotiable assets of the foundation through doing business deals, or to decrease the liquid assets through acts of giving, he would take it." In both cases, Feeney would perform the necessarily research himself, and then let his preternaturally powerful instincts do the rest. He would chance upon an article that mentioned a charity he thought promising, or hear from a friend about an institution in need of resources; he would personally perform due diligence and ask trusted advisers to check up on the potential beneficiary. He might offer an initial small grant as a diagnostic. And then if the organization or institution withstood this close scrutiny, he would commit to supporting them in full, with minimal interference or red tape.[27]

This was an idiosyncratic philanthropic system based on close personal relationships between Feeney, foundation officials and executives at certain beneficiary institutions. It thrived on what Feeney termed "informed risk-taking." Many of Atlantic's early grants were directed to Cornell University, where Feeney had gone to college, and where he had developed bonds with several top administrators. In Ireland, Feeney formed a close relationship with Ed Walsh, the president of the University of Limerick, which Feeney's funding single-handedly transformed from a small, backwater school into one of the nation's premier research universities. In the late 1990s, when Feeney determined that he wanted to help the people of Viet Nam, he initially worked through a small nonprofit, the East Meets West Foundation, which he read about in a short article in the *San Francisco Examiner*. Traveling to the country and meeting with the Foundation's representative there, as well as with the leaders of hospitals and universities, he identified what they considered their institution's most pressing needs—renovations to a pediatric center, new libraries at the nation's four major regional universities, money for water purification, among others—and after consultations and investigation, would arrange for significant grants to arrive. To Feeney, Viet Nam represented another opportunity ripe for investment. As one close associate explained to Conor O'Clery, Feeney "realized Viet Nam was the greatest bang for the buck."[28] (It wasn't until years later that Atlantic developed a formal strategic plan for its work in Viet Nam, which focused on systems change in health and education.)

Such an opportunistic, personal style of giving did not require—in fact militated against—a dense bureaucratic structure to support it. Feeney and the members of the board closest to him came to dominate the early Atlantic Foundation (which, together with the Atlantic Trust, became jointly known as The Atlantic Philanthropies in 2001); they could pursue their philanthropic preferences with minimal institutional constraints. His directives from the field would often come into the foundation shortly before a

[27] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 142, 248, 291; Jessica Leber, "An Unconventional Billionaire is Revolutionizing Philanthropy," *Fast Company*, October 8, 2014, accessed online at http://m.fastcompany.com/3032717/an-unconventional-billionaire-is-revolutionizing-philanthropy-by-closing-his-8-billion-found.

[28] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 228, 249 (Bob Matousek quote), 253, 348; Liz Welch, "A Brief History of The Atlantic Philanthropies," in *Laying Foundations for Change: Capital Investments of The Atlantic Philanthropies,* (The Atlantic Philanthropies, 2014), 26; Susan Parker, *The Atlantic Philanthropies in Viet Nam: 1998-2013* (The Atlantic Philanthropies 2013).

board meeting, with little chance for deliberation, and were met with what current Atlantic CEO Christopher Oechsli termed "a rubber stamp with little documentation." As Oechsli recalled in a 2012 memo, "For many years, Atlantic operated without a mission statement and with relatively few grantmaking guidelines. We had the qualities of an entrepreneurial start-up company: We had our first office in a garage in Ithaca. We had a handful of employees. Atlantic was opportunistic, fluid, intuitive, nimble."[29]

[29] [Christopher Oechsli], *Memorandum: 2020 Vision* (July 4, 2012).

This model represents one particular institutional embodiment of the Giving While Living ethic, fueled by the dynamism, vision, idiosyncrasies and passions of the living donor. Through it, Feeney developed a particular attraction to capital projects; as of August 2014, one third of Atlantic's grantmaking has been directed toward them. Indeed, it is possible that "Giving While Living" carries a bias toward such projects—as Atlantic president Christopher Oechsli has written, "they're a tangible manifestation of giving while living—you can see them take shape as well as see what happens in and around them." Capital projects present a means of expending a significant amount of philanthropic resources without a large professional staff, of allowing the "money raised for philanthropy…to be spent at the time that it's raised, or close to it," to use Feeney's injunction. They enable a donor to get money out the door, to direct funds toward institutions to which the donor might have a close personal interest or relationship and to see concrete results in a limited timeframe.[30]

[30] Christopher G. Oechsli, "Foreword," in *Laying Foundations for Change*, 21; "Interview with Christopher Oechsli," *Philanthropy Magazine* (Fall 2014), accessed online at http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/donor_intent/interview_with_christopher_oechsli.

Ultimately, over time, and especially after Feeney made a commitment to limited life philanthropy, Atlantic developed a more robust institutional apparatus and a more systematic, strategic style of grant-making. This development accentuated a key ambiguity within the Giving While Living ethic: what was the relationship between the strong personalist imperative and the drive to achieve maximum impact with one's giving? Carnegie had asserted that the former was necessary for the latter: that tapping the entrepreneur's talents would do the most good. But personal engagement could also be understood as a good in itself, which should not be sacrificed for the sake of efficiency, effectiveness, or impact. The increased systemization and professionalization of Atlantic forced Feeney, and the foundation's leadership, to confront those questions and to test how institutional philanthropy could amplify, transform, or potentially clash with the personal Giving While Living imperative.[31]

[31] Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, iv.

Atlantic ultimately developed a distinctive response to these questions, allowing personal and institutional modes of giving to run on parallel tracks. Atlantic President John Healy formalized this compromise in 2004 with the establishment of the Founding Chairman's program, which provided Feeney with his own pot of money alongside Atlantic's four program areas (Disadvantaged Children and Youth, Aging, Population Health, and Reconciliation and Human Rights). This system allowed Feeney to continue to exercise his entrepreneurial, opportunistic style of grant-making—as with large gifts for capital projects to University of California at San Francisco Medical Center and to biomedical research institutions in Australia—while also maintaining more predictability and regimentation for the allocation of the remaining funds.[32]

[32] When he became Atlantic's president in 2007, having come from the George Soros-funded Open Society Institute, Gara LaMarche compared the two living donors whose foundations he had worked for. He described Feeney as less "interventionist" than Soros, who, unlike Feeney, served as chairman of his foundation's board. Feeney was "a quiet board member but a very respected one" whose largest contribution was to "set the tone for Atlantic Philanthropies." "Interview—Gara LaMarche," *Alliance Magazine* (August 1, 2007), accessed online at http://www.alliancemagazine.org/interview/interview-gara-lamarche/. O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 316, 334; Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, 19.

Taken as a whole, over the years, Feeney's grants came to around a third of Atlantic's total grant spending (Feeney routinely went over the amount allocated in the Founding Chairman "pot"). For the remaining two-thirds, Feeney was willing to defer to other board members or staff and even acknowledged that Atlantic at times supported programs that he would not have under his own exclusive discretion. To cite just one example, he showed little initial interest in Atlantic's entrance into South Africa, a territorial focus pushed by Harvey Dale as early as 1994. But even though Feeney did not arrange a visit to the country till 2005, at which time Atlantic had spent more than $100 million there, he did not object to Dale's and John Healy's enthusiasm for a programmatic emphasis on South Africa. Such a striking blend of donor engagement and detachment points to one institutional configuration of the Giving While Living ethic. There was some tension, but no necessary contradiction, between these two orientations; Feeney came to appreciate that only by removing his focus from certain sectors of grantmaking could he direct it toward his favored programs and institutions.[33]

[33] Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, 20; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 297, 316.

It was a precarious arrangement, one which few other foundations have been able to sustain. As Tony Proscio has written, "Among foundations with living, active donors, Atlantic's juxtaposition of two different types of grantmaking—one personal, the other institutional, and both on separate programmatic tracks—is exceptional." It came under immense strain, resulting in a period of significant acrimony between Feeney and the Atlantic board. The crisis began in the spring of 2009, as Feeney grew concerned about the direction the board and the new CEO, Gara LaMarche, had been taking. LaMarche was an outspoken advocate for "social justice" philanthropy and had initiated several large-scale grants to progressive advocacy organizations, including $27 million to Health Care for America Now! (HCAN) to push for passage of the Affordable Care Act. Feeney worried that these commitments, requiring higher staff expenses as well as a longer grants tail, would threaten his own ability to make discretionary grants for bricks-and-mortar projects. He made clear that these sorts of social justice grants were not programs he would have supported himself with his own money. Of course, he had been willing to tolerate some divergence between management's preferences and his own, but as the split widened, the strain had become too great.

Even more fundamentally, Feeney came to believe that the Board was not giving the proper respect to his entrepreneurial approach to giving, one that emphasized undervalued opportunities and good philanthropic "value," and that had a partiality for "big bets," sizeable investments with clear strategic purpose. He called for a halt to grantmaking by management and for several of the longest-serving Board members to resign. The Board, for its part, suggested that Feeney give up the Founding Chairman's program and integrate his own projects into Atlantic's broader grantmaking process, a request that carried more urgency given the need for regularity as the foundation began to plan its spend down.

Ultimately, a resolution was achieved with the resignation of LaMarche in 2011 and with some turnover on the Board (including Feeney's departure). Chris Oechsli, who had served in many positions at the foundation over the previous decade, and before that, had headed the General Atlantic Group (Atlantic's international investment subsidiary) and who had grown close to Feeney, became president and CEO. Yet the tensions that had brought on the conflict did not entirely dissipate. The Board continued to struggle to balance the prerogatives of the donor with the demands of the institution; according to one senior Atlantic executive quoted by Conor O'Clery, the Board concluded that "the living founder had important moral rights and some veto rights, but not on everything, every time." Feeney, for his part, continued with his bold, opportunistic grant-making, asserting that he did not mean to abdicate any of those rights when he resigned as director. In fact, in December 2011, when Feeney made a grant of $350 million to secure the bid for Cornell, in partnership with Technion University, to establish a technology campus on Roosevelt Island, he did so without first informing the Atlantic Board. The gift represented a reassertion of his distinctive approach to grantmaking, a "big bet" opportunity that he believed it was his right, and even his obligation, to pursue. [34]

In other words, Feeney was asserting a particular understanding of the Giving While Living ethic, one in which the first and second strands are closely entwined, and in which the rights and responsibilities of the donor are by no means fulfilled or abrogated with the establishment of a foundation and the introduction of a more structured philanthropic bureaucracy. As Feeney had asserted in a memorandum to the board, there was a "moral and fiduciary obligation that the interests, values, and passions of the living sole donor be given central consideration in spending the fruits of his labor." In the midst of the conflict with the board, Feeney pointed to an article in an internal Atlantic journal as a sign of his being sidelined. "At Atlantic, we define Giving While Living as the decision by a donor to spend his or her philanthropic resources while alive, and generally, *but not necessarily*, with the donor's active participation in the giving program." The emphasis was Feeney's. He clearly resented the prioritizing of the first, transactional "pillar" of Giving While Living—the dispossession of wealth—above the second, the active engagement of the donor. For Feeney, the two could not, and should not, be disjoined.[35]

[34] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 336, 343, 376, 379, 388.

[35] As current Atlantic CEO Christopher Oechsli has framed this tension: "One of the challenges of any foundation with a living donor is coping with his or her entrepreneurial spirit that is dynamic and not much bounded by structure. An organization—a typical foundation—by nature needs to plan, predict, and organize around strategies, budgets, and targeted outcomes. This easily lends itself to a less dynamic or responsive approach than that of an entrepreneurial individual donor, and there are inevitable tensions. For a period, Atlantic fell out of tune with its donor's approach, and there were difficult issues." "Interview with Christopher Oechsli." O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 353, 354-355.

CHAPTER VII

Modern Philanthropy, the Paradox of Stewardship and the Relationship between Giving and Guiding

This tension between the individual philanthropist and the bureaucratic structures established to support him has defined modern American philanthropy from its Gilded Age origins. It is fueled by a paradox at the heart of modern notions of stewardship, the ideal that lies at the root of the Giving While Living ethic and that dominated discourse surrounding the responsibilities of wealth during the turn of the last century. The scale and scope of the fortunes produced by the emerging industrial economy made a commitment to stewardship an especially important tool for the social legitimation of concentrated wealth. And yet that scale and scope was so immense that stewardship began to strain under the burden of its own demands. The fortunes Carnegie, Rockefeller and other Gilded Age entrepreneurs accumulated were so gigantic that it was impossible to apply the personal attention to the administration of philanthropy that stewardship demanded. Some form of bureaucratic mediation became necessary. Wealthy individuals had long turned to advisers in matters of charity to provide a buffer against personal solicitations or to offer technical guidance or moral instruction. But Gilded Age philanthropists soon came to appreciate the limits of a strictly personal approach to philanthropy, a recognition that sparked the establishment of the great foundations at the turn of the last century.[36]

[36] Rhodri Davies, *Public Good by Public Means: How Philanthropy Shapes Britain* (London: Alliance Publishing Trust, 2015), 30-31.

In Carnegie's case, a decade after the composition of his "Gospel of Wealth," as a biographer has written, he came to realize that "no matter how fast he had run during those ten years of giving, he had not run fast enough. The interest on his bonds kept gaining on his dispersal of those bonds. He had given away $180,000,000, but he still had almost the same amount left." The fact weighed heavily on Carnegie; despite his famous injunction, he worried that he would in fact die a wealthy man—and thus, by his own terms, a disgrace. In something of an admission of defeat, he had considered setting up a charitable trust in his will, but his friend, Secretary of State Elihu Root, offered him another solution: set up a trust during his lifetime, and transfer his fortune to it. Such was the genesis of the Carnegie Corporation, established in 1911, to which Carnegie directed the vast majority of his remaining wealth, some $125 million. Established as a perpetual foundation, the Corporation required that others would take on the burden of stewardship for Carnegie's fortune in the future. But in the final years of his life, Carnegie used the Corporation as a means of furthering his own idiosyncratic philanthropic interests. He named himself as the Corporation's first president and filled its board with the heads of the other philanthropic trusts that he had funded and with business associates that he knew would defer to his will. As one of those trustees commented, "When Mr. Carnegie formed the Carnegie Corporation, he simply incorporated himself." It represented a compromise between the Giving While Living mandate and the strenuous exigencies of administering a colossal fortune.[37]

[37] Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 882; Henry Pritchett quoted in Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie*, 767; Nielsen, *Big Foundations*, 34-35.

John D. Rockefeller faced a perhaps even more extreme predicament because of the stringent regimen of stewardship imposed by his Baptist upbringing: what wealth God gave him, Rockefeller believed he had a solemn duty to administer responsibly for the public good. Rockefeller tithed at an early age, but as his fortune swelled—and as his own celebrity spread—the demands upon him grew gigantic. His philanthropic adviser, the Baptist minister Frederick Gates, counted fifty thousand "begging letters" that flooded his office in a one-month period and Rockefeller often stayed up late into the night, pouring over each, in search of worthy solicitations. Charitable supplicants followed Rockefeller almost everywhere he went; as Gates recounted, Rockefeller "was constantly hunted, stalked, and hounded like a wild animal" and, by Rockefeller's own account, was nearly driven to the brink of a mental breakdown by the onslaught.[38]

[38] Soskis, "Problem of Charity in Industrial America," 237-238; Frederick Taylor Gates, *Chapters in My Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 161 (quote), 163-164; Raymond Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (1952; repr., New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 3.

Gates pushed Rockefeller to embrace "wholesale" as opposed to "retail" giving; he urged that his philanthropy be channeled through existing (often denominational) institutions that could mediate between Rockefeller and potential beneficiaries. He also urged Rockefeller to direct his giving toward more ambitious ends—the root causes of social ills as opposed to their symptoms—and the grant-making foundation provided Rockefeller with an excellent instrument to do so. Rockefeller established several foundations dedicated to specific causes—the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (1901), the General Education Board (1903), the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for Eradication of Hookworm (1909). But the narrowness of their purview and the limited scale of Rockefeller's donations to them did not seem commensurate to Gates to the scale of his massive fortune. In a letter that Harvey Dale would present to Feeney in his survey of the literature of philanthropy, Gates wrote, "Mr. Rockefeller, your fortune is rolling up like an avalanche! You must distribute it faster than it grows! If you do not, it will crush you and your children and your children's children." He suggested that Rockefeller establish a general purpose foundation, to be managed by a team of able and astute trustees, that would be directed toward the grandest of ambitions. As etched in its charter, the Rockefeller Foundation, founded in 1913, would address itself to "the promotion of the well-being of mankind."[39]

[39] Gates quoted in Fosdick, *Story of the Rockefeller Foundation*, 3; Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 163; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 98.

For Rockefeller and Carnegie, the establishment of a foundation was both the culmination of and a deviation from the modern Gospel of Wealth. The bureaucracies they established became impressive machineries of philanthropy with global reach. But they also necessarily minimized the personal engagement of the donor. Both Rockefeller and Carnegie made peace with this compromise, in part due to their faith in the "men of affairs" they chose to helm the institutions. "I have not had the hardihood," Rockefeller once said, "even to suggest how people, so much more experienced and wise in those things than I, should work out the details even of those plans with which I have had the honor to be associated." He did not agree to become a trustee of the first philanthropic institutions he established, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, the General Education Board, or the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission, and although he did initially agree to serve as a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation, he never attended a single board meeting.[40]

[40] Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 883; Fosdick, *Story of the Rockefeller Foundation*, 11.

Was this a dereliction of philanthropic responsibility? Or did it represent a demonstration of entrepreneurial stewardship itself, since an element of the skill that led businessmen like Rockefeller to amass their fortunes was a talent for delegation, for selecting trusted deputies and agents to assume responsibilities for key tasks? Given that the institutional configuration that dominated the philanthropic landscape in the twentieth century, the perpetual foundation, required some degree of the diffusion of the donor's responsibilities of wealth, how much guidance should the public expect—or demand—from philanthropists?

For those who seek to make the integrity of donor intent the cardinal value in the philanthropic sector, the answer is clear. In fact, the defenders of donor intent have rallied behind "Giving While Living," which, as the author of a recent book on the topic puts it, "resolves the issue of donor intent." The Philanthropy Roundtable, an organization representing conservative-minded donors, has taken the lead in championing donor intent, and has often held up Chuck Feeney as an exemplar (though, in doing so, they have often overlooked the wide latitude that Feeney gave to Atlantic's board to pursue programs independent of his own particular interests). In an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*, Adam Meyerson, the Roundtable's current president, explained that "Giving While Living" was Feeney's "way to make certain his funds support causes he believes in." Meyerson has suggested that "Giving While Living" entailed not just a donor's active personal engagement but also the commitment to spend all one's philanthropic resources in one's lifetime, so that no posthumous violation of donor intent could occur. But he has also made clear that such personal engagement could be a valuable means of communicating to boards the philanthropic preferences, mission and values which should be followed once a donor is no longer living. In order to safeguard their philanthropic principles, Meyerson instructed donors to "Give generously while you're alive and able to guide and oversee your gifts."[41]

The question of how to weigh the first two strands of the Giving While Living ethic, the imperative to *give* and to *guide*, was raised recently by one of the most celebrated episodes in contemporary philanthropy. In 2006, investor Warren Buffett, who at the time ranked as the world's second richest individual, announced that he would hand over the bulk of his more than $40 billion fortune in Berkshire Hathaway shares to five foundations, chief among them (taking in more than 5/6 of the total) the Bill

[41] Jeffrey Cain, *Protecting Donor Intent: How to Define and Safeguard Your Philanthropic Principles* (Philanthropy Roundtable, 2012), accessed online at http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/donor_intent/choosing_a_time-frame_for_donating_assets_to_charity; Adam Meyerson, "When Philanthropy Goes Wrong," *Wall Street Journal*, March 9, 2012; "Turning Passion into Action: Giving While Living," *Atlantic Reports* (June 2010), 21; Martin Morse Wooster, *The Great Philanthropists and the Problem of "Donor Intent"* (Washington DC: Capital Research Center, 1998).

& Melinda Gates Foundation, which would ultimately receive more than $30 billion in stock. As Buffett explained his decision, over the course of their friendship he came to admire Gates's talents as an entrepreneur and as a philanthropist and realized that Gates could "give [his money] away better than I can." He hoped that other wealthy citizens would take up his model and, instead of forming their own foundations, would channel their money to pre-existing philanthropic institutions with exemplary track records and admirable leaders.

How should we think of this paradigm in terms of "Giving While Living"? On the one hand, Buffett had previously assumed that his fortune would be distributed to philanthropy only after his death; his confidence in the Gates's as philanthropic agents led him to change his views regarding the time frame of his giving, which constitutes a clear victory for "Giving While Living." Buffett pointed out that one challenge facing most wealthy people who want to engage in philanthropy is that "they're old, with contemporaries who are not at their peak years and who don't have much time ahead of them." He considered himself lucky that he could "turn to younger people" as philanthropic surrogates—the Gates's, "who are ungodly bright, whose ideas have been proven, who already have shown an ability to scale it up and do it right."

And, as Buffett argued, in delegating authority over his philanthropy to a trusted associate, he was taking a course of action common in his line of work, where business leaders routinely hand their money over to wealth managers who they believe have a higher degree of expertise in the rigors of investment management. As he told *Fortune* magazine, "Compare what I'm doing with [the Gates's] to my situation at Berkshire, where I have talented and proven people in charge of our businesses. They do a much better job than I could in running their operations. What can be more logical, in whatever you want done, than finding someone better equipped than you are to do it? Who wouldn't select Tiger Woods to take his place in a high-stakes golf game? That's how I feel about this decision about my money."

So in one respect, Buffett's decision to hand over the administration of his philanthropy is consistent with elements of the second strand of the Giving While Living ethic, which asks the donor to apply his own talents to the administration of philanthropy. And Buffett did not just hand over his money to the Gates Foundation, submit to a slew of celebratory interviews and then wipe his hands clean of the affair; he took a seat on the Gates Foundation board, joining Bill, Melinda and William Gates Sr. But he did relinquish an active, hands-on role as to how his money will be disbursed. So to what extent would it advance the cause of "Giving While Living" if more wealthy donors took up Buffett's example and turned over their philanthropy to well-chosen surrogates? Pondering that question requires a further consideration of the personalism at the heart of the ethic. Does it have an intrinsic value, such that the sustained, personal engagement of the wealthy citizen in philanthropic affairs is a good in itself that should be encouraged? Or does it have a largely instrumental one, since it leads those who have accumulated significant wealth to apply their particular talents and temperaments to its redistribution?

Such questions point to larger unresolved ones about the intersection between "Giving While Living" and institutional philanthropy. Is the ethic fulfilled with a gift to a foundation? Or when the foundation disburses those funds and they reach grantees? And does the living donor need to take an active role in that disbursal? A foundation, especially a perpetual one, places both a stretch of time and a host of personnel between the act of giving and the receipt of gift. Does this mediation serve "Giving While Living" or subtly undermine it? If Atlantic Philanthropies had not committed to limited life philanthropy and had modeled itself on the Carnegie Corporation, becoming an institution inspired but not actively directed by its founder, could it still be said to honor "Giving While Living?" These questions simmer underneath the surface of the Giving While Living ethic.[42]

[42] Loomis, "Warren Buffett Gives it All Away"; Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 80.

CHAPTER VIII

The Third Strand of Giving While Living: Public Advocacy

Historically, the shift from personal to institutional giving coincided with another transformation: from an understanding of philanthropy as a private endeavor to a recognition of it as a public vocation. The transition was starkest in regard to Rockefeller philanthropy. John D. Rockefeller embraced a Christian ethic of giving that favored discretion; if he did not always insist on anonymous giving, then he did at least give with a minimum of pomp. Rockefeller routinely denied requests for lists of his donations—even from foreign dignitaries who wished to use them to galvanize the wealthy in their own nations to greater giving—and rarely spoke publicly about his motives or philanthropic strategies. He prefaced the section of his autobiography on the topic of his philanthropy with the apology that it is "beyond the pale of good taste to speak at all of such a personal subject." It was not just humility that counseled such reserve; the desire to avoid the torrent of solicitations that met any announcement of a large gift did so as well.[43]

[43] Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 210-212; Soskis, "Problem of Charity in Industrial America," 278-279; Benjamin Soskis, "Watchdog vs. Self-Promotion: Why Donor Lists Matter," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, February 2015, 37.

But as the scale of Rockefeller's fortune and giving grew, and as he became an increasingly polarizing figure—attacked by progressives for Standard Oil's aggressive, monopolistic business practices—Rockefeller's advisers recognized that he would have to compromise his preference for privacy. At first, this strategy was mostly understood in terms of public relations, as a way of parrying the insinuations about the ulterior, selfish motives that fueled Rockefeller's philanthropy.

But with the growth of Rockefeller's foundations, his advisers came to understand *publicity*—which in the Progressive era conveyed both institutional self-promotion and a commitment to transparency—as an essential component of philanthropy. Philanthropy's grand ambitions required it to be open to public scrutiny. Writing to Rockefeller in 1905 and urging him to create a series of foundations, his adviser Frederick Gates declared that the funds he would need to devote to such institutions "should be so large that to become a trustee of one of them is to make a man at once a public character. They should be so large that their administration should be as much a matter of public concern and public inquiry and public criticism as any of the functions of the government are now. They should be so large as to attract the attention of the entire civilized world, their administration become the subject of the most intelligent criticism of the world." When the Rockefeller Foundation began to publicize its giving, some critics charged that it was "flaunting" its benefactions and violating the Christian dictates of humility. But Rockefeller officials responded that releasing information on its gifts was the only way that the public could hold it accountable as a steward of Rockefeller's immense wealth.[44]

[44] Gates, *Chapters in My Life*, 209; Soskis, "Problem of Charity in Industrial America," 323-324, 333.

Andrew Carnegie also came to regard philanthropy as a public vocation, which he deemed necessary not only to hold the wealthy accountable but also to allow them to serve as models for emulation. Indeed, the distinctiveness of his "Gospel of Wealth" lies not so much in its content, which was shared by other devotees of an ethic of stewardship, but in its public articulation. As Henry Potter, the bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, explained in an 1891 review of Carnegie's essay, "At this moment I cannot recall, in our generation, any other instance of one possessed of exceptional wealth who has undertaken to discuss, publicly and at any length, the question of its disposition." Carnegie added an additional responsibility to those associated with great wealth: not only directing one's own fortune toward beneficent ends, but exhorting others to do the same.[45]

[45] Bishop Henry Potter, "The Gospel for Wealth," *North American Review* 152, no. 414 (May 1891), 514.

One of Carnegie's most frequent themes was the burdens borne by the wealthy, and he often implied that such an educative mission was among them. He found the work of promoting the 'Gospel of Wealth' through his own example distasteful, he suggested, and would have much preferred to give away his millions cocooned in his own study. As he wrote to one friend, others had urged him to go about his philanthropy with less fanfare, but he "knew that advertising was essential for success, i.e. to spreading abroad what could be done…Of course its [sic] disagreeable work & puts me forward as a vain trumpeter but one who isn't willing to play this part *for the good* to be done, isn't much of a man." It was a not very convincing act. Carnegie had a taste for pomp and a genius for self-promotion; when he made his triumphant return with his mother to his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland to dedicate a library, he was met with a grand procession, with banners reading, "Welcome Carnegie, generous son," and didn't seem to mind. His critics seized upon such theatrics as exposing the egotism at the root of his identity as a benefactor. As the comic character Mr. Dooley remarked, "I like [Carnegie], because he ain't ashamed to give publicly….Irvy time he dhrops a dollar it makes a noise like a waither fallin' downstairs with a tray iv dishes." Indeed, Carnegie's performative 'Gospel' does point to some of the risks associated with the public element of "Giving While Living": it can stoke personal vanity and can leave the gifts tainted with suspicions regarding the giver's self-interested motives.[46]

[46] As his biographer Joseph Wall has pointed out, though the public believed that Carnegie insisted that his name be engraved on the front entrance of his libraries as a condition of his donation of the funds to construct them, this was never, in fact, a formal stipulation. Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 819. Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 409, 822 (quote); Dooley quoted in Irving G. Wyllie, "The Reputation of the American Philanthropist: A Historian's View," *Social Service Review* 32, no. 3 (September 1958), 220.

Given Carnegie's taste for philanthropic pageantry, he does not perfectly fit as the forebear to Chuck Feeney. Perhaps an even more appropriate candidate would be Julius Rosenwald, the long-serving head of Sears, Roebuck who masterminded the company's transformation into a mail-order behemoth in the first decades of the twentieth century. Rosenwald shared Feeney's suspicion of perpetual institutions and forged the links between "Giving While Living" and limited life philanthropy that Feeney would tighten.

Additionally, Rosenwald, more so than Carnegie or Rockefeller, turned to philanthropy at the peak of his business career, and so could be said to exemplify the Giving While Living imperative even more strongly. When, at the end of Rosenwald's life, his friend Edwin Embree, who served as the head of the Rosenwald Fund, attempted to distill his giving philanthropy down into its most distinctive essence, he stated first the model of a "personal interest by the donor in all the activities in which he contributes."[47]

[47] Peter M. Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 57, 134, 142, 299, 376 (Embree quote).

Rosenwald shared with Feeney an uneasiness with public giving, but, like Feeney, found sound reasons to overcome it. The source of that uneasiness was different, however. It did not stem from some penchant for privacy or preference for discretion, though Rosenwald was, according to his biographer, a "generally self-effacing man." Rather, Rosenwald worried primarily that too much attention directed toward his role as philanthropist would detract from the focus on the responsibilities of communities to contribute to their own social good. Most famously, he insisted that the name of the Chicago museum he founded be changed from the Rosenwald Museum to the Museum of Science and Industry, to ensure that the public would not feel absolved from supporting it with their own contributions in the years to come. "If no name is used," he wrote, the building would "belong to the people."[48]

[48] Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 131, 139, 270 (quote), 328.

Yet Rosenwald was also keenly aware of the power of a philanthropist to promote broader voluntaristic engagement through the burnishing of his own philanthropic identity. He warned against anonymous giving, because he believed that the "personality behind the gift is far more valuable than the gift itself." He put this theory into practice for a publicly orchestrated giving campaign in honor of his fiftieth birthday. He gave eight large donations to a number of key institutions with which he was associated—including Associated Jewish Charities of Chicago, the University of Chicago, and the Tuskegee Institute and Booker T. Washington for the construction of southern schools for African Americans. His desire to promote his theories of responsible giving was not a secondary consideration of this campaign but its primary motivation. He chose the beneficiary organizations carefully, not just in terms of the good they could do, but the message about philanthropy they would communicate.

[49] Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 123, 213 (quote).

Rosenwald hired the editor of the *Chicago Record-Herald*, H.H. Kohlsaat, to manage the publicity surrounding the gifts, which were announced to the public by his friend, the noted social reformer Jane Addams. Kohlsaat coined a slogan for the campaign: "Give While You Live," which was affixed to materials sent out to newspapers around the nation to announce the gifts. In a cartoon that ran in the *Record-Herald* in August 1912, the slogan is shown on an embroidered sign hanging on a wall, while Rosenwald hands out money to various representatives of his chosen causes. The cartoon is captioned: "Other millionaires please take note—this form of birthday party is not copyrighted." The campaign seems to have been a success from a public relations perspective, as newspapers around the nation picked up the story of his donations and several Chicago papers ran interviews with the benefactor. He was able to communicate to a local and national audience the two key tenets behind his "Give While You Live" push, which would also animate much of Chuck Feeney's ethic: the satisfaction that could be derived from giving and the need to do so wisely and expeditiously.[50]

[50] Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 131, 132 (copy of cartoon).

CHAPTER IX

Moving Out of the Shadows: Chuck Feeney's Abandonment of Anonymity

It's one of the great ironies of the story of Chuck Feeney and "Giving While Living" that he would become an exemplar of this promotional imperative, since for his first several decades as a philanthropist, he embodied the opposite extreme: the commitment to giving anonymously or within the strict bounds of confidentiality. "It is striking," as Tony Proscio has written, "that someone who spent decades keeping every dollar of his giving a tightly enforced secret—not a single building, anywhere in the world, is named for him—is now welcoming opportunities to make his case about philanthropy." This irony can be traced to divergent imperatives within the Giving While Living ethic. In a sense, Feeney's early embrace of anonymous philanthropy can be understood as an offshoot of his intensely *personal* commitment to giving, in which philanthropy could be best nourished under the cloak of privacy. Indeed, it is no coincidence that before the issuance of public annual reports was mandated by law, foundations with living donors were the mostly likely to resist doing so. But a personal element in philanthropy has also often been fused to a dedication to stewardship, which has demanded that the giver make the most of his or her talents, and which has often regarded the philanthropist as an exemplary, and therefore necessarily public, figure.[51]

There were several motivations behind Feeney's attraction to anonymous giving. As his biographer Conor O'Clery explains, Feeney has an allergy

[51] Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, 22; Nielsen, *Big Foundations*, 306.

toward "blowing his own horn." He is naturally unassuming and avoids self-promotion. Like Rosenwald, he also worried about the "crowding out" effect, about discouraging donations to the causes he favored. He had received a wave of requests for funding from various correspondents when an initial large gift to Cornell had been announced and, like Rockefeller, he hoped to avoid the future avalanche of solicitations that would surely arrive when word of his philanthropy spread. Secrecy had also been key to his money-making; the duty-free business depended on maintaining the gap between what airport authorities were willing to sell concession rights for and how much revenue those rights actually brought in, which required strict confidentiality as to profits. Later, secrecy became essential to hide from the tax authorities DFS's complex corporate structure and how much its owners were taking out of the company as dividends.[52]

[52] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 100, 120, 144.

Feeney also believed that operating in secret allowed Atlantic to be more nimble and flexible. He could, for instance, visit site locations or potential grantees without attracting undue attention, or the flattery and deference that can warp relationships between benefactors and beneficiaries. In other words, operating in secret gave Feeney more freedom to exercise his own intuitive and opportunistic style of giving (although as some commentators have noted, it also required him to rely almost entirely on the foundation's own staff for guidance, since it made it difficult to turn to outside sources for advice).[53]

[53] Welch, "Brief History of the Atlantic Philanthropies," 25.

No major philanthropic institutions of Atlantic's size and influence had ever managed to remain shrouded in such secrecy. Many recipients of even the largest grants offered by the foundation remained unaware that Feeney was their source. Ultimately, though, the cover slipped, loosened by media attention toward DFS and its founders, and legal squabbling between those founders that resulted in court proceedings which made public the extent of Feeney's wealth and the fact that he had turned it over to his foundation. With Feeney's sale of his shares of DFS to LVMH, Atlantic gained an additional $1.6 billion and could claim assets of $3.5 billion; if it had been based in the U.S., it would have been the fourth largest foundation in the nation. It became too big to hide, especially with financial and business journalists on the scent.

Feeney began to move out of the shadows as both entrepreneur and philanthropist. Atlantic orchestrated a publicity rollout for Feeney, which included an exclusive interview with the *New York Times*—though Feeney declined to be photographed—as well as several other fawning profiles (the New York *Daily News* declared that "Chuck Feeney is what Donald Trump would be if he lived his entire existence backward"). Grantees were informed of Feeney's identity as well. Feeney did not want to relinquish the culture of anonymity entirely and so insisted that grantees continue to keep his gifts confidential. But by that time the demand had become something of a charade, since Atlantic's outsize contributions had become an open secret in many of the sectors that it had seeded (Feeney even began to get credit for anonymous gifts that he had *not* made). By 2001, Atlantic informed grantees that they were no longer bound by the confidentiality agreements they had signed.[54]

[54] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 235 (quote), 238, 240, 309, 310; Judith Miller, "He Gave Away $600 million, and No One Knew," *New York Times*, January 23, 1997.

Atlantic's acceptance of transparency was not merely the product of a journalistic inquisition; it was also driven by Feeney's growing understanding of "Giving While Living" as an ethic carrying a responsibility to promote a culture of active philanthropy among his wealthy peers, which required a more public philanthropic persona on his part. As early as July 1991, when Feeney began to consider "unveiling" the Atlantic Foundation to the public, he had annotated a draft of a disclosure of the foundation with the comment that his goal was to stimulate the interest of wealthy individuals in "giving while living" and that he "couldn't do that while continuing to be known as a reclusive billionaire with no philanthropic interests." Once Atlantic embraced the commitment to limited life philanthropy and attracted additional media attention as it began to spend down its assets, Feeney's role as an evangel for "Giving While Living" became even more pronounced.

Feeney's ultimate acceptance of the need for publicity can also be understood as an offshoot of his attraction to the idea of philanthropic leverage. For much of its existence, Atlantic Foundation (and then The Atlantic Philanthropies) had skillfully managed its own assets to draw greater commitments from governments and other funders. Feeney began to think of the example he could set for other donors in similar terms, and sought to more profitably invest his own reputational capital. Such calculations led Feeney to overcome his natural instinct for self-effacement and resistance to self-aggrandizement and to agree not only to strip the veil of secrecy from Atlantic in 1997, but to allow himself to become a focus of media attention. He cooperated in the writing of an authorized biography by the Irish journalist Conor O'Clery, and with its release, subjected himself to a round of flattering profiles and radio interviews, always making sure to boost "Giving While Living." He even submitted to a television documentary, *Secret Billionaire: The Chuck Feeney Story*, produced by an Irish film company and released in 2010. As the narrator of the documentary explained, although he kept the scale of his generosity a secret for much of his adult life, "now, in his late '70s, [Feeney is] telling his story, in the hope that others will be inspired as he was."[55]

In accepting the need for more publicity, Feeney is following a course taken by the philanthropic sector more generally in the last decade. "On balance, anonymity, for all its admirable modesty," write Matthew Bishop and Michael Green, "is probably against the spirit of philanthrocapitalism." The pressures have been applied both endogenously and exogenously. More scrutiny than ever is now being applied to the philanthropic sector, and the watchdogs that have emerged in the press and among nonprofits make more stringent demands for increased transparency and accountability. Much as business leaders now jockey for position within the various lists of the nation's richest individuals, a slew of "philanthropy lists" push the wealthy to compete over the scale and scope of their giving, which requires publicizing their work. As one wealth adviser recently told *Forbes*, "We're seeing more givers who were formerly donating anonymously now willing to give openly as a way to inspire others to follow their lead."[56]

Yet several features distinguish the way that Feeney has chosen to share his story and to promote the Giving While Living ethic. The first is a rootedness in voluntarism. Feeney has shown little inclination to coerce, shame or bully his peers into giving; you could not imagine him, like Carnegie, speaking of those who died wealthy as a "disgrace." Such restraint points to a tension between the second and third strands of the Giving While Living ethic. If philanthropy is a deeply personal vocation, how can anyone presume to lecture another on the responsibilities of wealth? Imposing one's own ideas regarding giving would undermine the very source of giving's vitality. Feeney's answer to this conundrum has been to exercise a sort of soft power, wielded through his personal example. "It is their call what the rich do with their money," he has said. "I would not want to impose my thoughts on any rich person—he can keep it all or spend it all."[57]

Feeney will occasionally issue moral exhortations, but they are frequently tempered by his reluctance to impose on others into a sort of passive aggression. "Wealth brings responsibilities," he has said, but then adds,

[55] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 169, 328-330; Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, 23; *Secret Billionaire*.

[56] Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 46; Benjamin Soskis, "The Importance of Criticizing Philanthropy," *Atlantic* online, May 12, 2004, acceded online at http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-philanthropy-criticism/361951/; Katia Savchuk, "Meet America's Top Givers of 2015," *Forbes*, October 5, 2016, accessed online at http://www.forbes.com/sites/katiasavchuk/2016/10/05/meet-americas-top-givers-of-2015/#68be6901688a.

[57] See also Feeney's remarks to an Australian network when asked how he might boost the country's meager philanthropic culture: "Well, to be honest, my makeup tells me if a person makes money — I know we worked hard to make ours — that they are entitled to decide what they do with it. So I am not about to tell someone what they should do." "Six Billion Dollar Man," *Australian Broadcasting System*, July 30, 2009, accessed online at http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/news/six-billion-dollar-man. Over the last decades, more philanthropists have been willing to turn to public shaming as a means of galvanizing the wealthy to greater giving. Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 53-54; Benjamin Soskis, "The Problem with Guilting the Rich into Donating More," *Washington Post*, June 27, 2014. O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 382.

"People have to determine themselves whether they feel an obligation to use some of their wealth to improve life for their fellow human beings rather than create problems for future generations." (This does not seem like much of a choice.) Instead, Feeney seems more comfortable focusing on how personally fulfilling philanthropy has been—"a rich source of joy and satisfaction" for him and for his family, as he wrote in a 2010 manifesto—and hoping that his experience could radiate outward to instruct others. "Try it. You'll like it," has been the campaign's unofficial motto. Indeed, though one of his most frequently invoked quips—that it is more fun to give away money when you are alive than when you are dead—has often been interpreted simply as an injunction to exercise active stewardship, it also expresses a central truth for Feeney: that philanthropy is actually *fun*. And it also suggests another important rationale for "Giving While Living": that communicating that fact is best done by a warm-blooded donor, in the glow of his giving.[58]

[58] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 348 (manifesto quote) 382, 392 (quote); *Secret Billionaire*; Proscio, *Harvest Time for Atlantic Philanthropies 2011–2012*, 22.

This emphasis on the experiential benefits of philanthropy would become one of the primary themes of Feeney's and Atlantic's advocacy for "Giving While Living." It often blended with instrumental arguments about the effectiveness of personal philanthropic engagement. "It's simple, really," Feeney announced upon receiving the *Forbes 400* Lifetime Achievement Award for Philanthropy (presented to him by Warren Buffett). "You get more satisfaction from giving while you're alive and involved. You learn and make adjustments to achieve the highest and best use of your resources." This approach deviated in significant ways from the path taken by Carnegie, who in many of his public expressions stressed the difficulty and challenges of philanthropy. For Carnegie, philanthropy was a burden borne by the wealthy, not an enjoyable pastime. This theme stemmed in part from his efforts to legitimate the project of philanthropy to a skeptical public, and in doing so, to justify the Gilded Age concentrations of wealth. Heavy sits the crown of the Gilded Age tycoon, he suggested. Or, as he often quipped, millionaires who laugh are rare. But the emphasis on the burdens of philanthropy also reflected Carnegie's own experience; for as his own fortune swelled, he grew increasingly disenchanted with the practice of philanthropy. He had been wounded by attacks on his giving and had turned his attention to domestic and international politics as a means of furthering the world peace movement. Other early philanthropists, however, did anticipate Feeney and his evangelizing for philanthropy based on the pleasures it could bring. Julius Rosenwald emphasized this point in his own writings, while his contemporary, Eastman Kodak Founder George Eastman, urged fellow men of wealth to "get into action and have fun."[59]

But if Feeney diverged from Carnegie's "Gospel" in his reluctance to shame and in his focus on the experiential benefits of philanthropy, in at least one way, he was perfectly aligned with the steel titan's approach to advocating for "Giving While Living." Both espoused an ecumenical and pluralistic approach to discussions of the proper objects of philanthropy, although each emphasized a different reason for doing so. Feeney's humility, his non-judgmental nature, and his belief in the deeply personal nature of philanthropy, argued against the imposition of his own philanthropic perspectives on others. "I think there is an obligation for the haves to reach out and to see what they can do," he said in the 2010 documentary, *Secret Billionaire: The Chuck Feeney Story*. "Any money people give to any good cause, as long as it is well-managed, is worth-while." For his part, although in his "Gospel of Wealth," Carnegie outlined a number of forms that well-considered philanthropy could assume—gifts to libraries, to parks, and museums, for instance—he also made clear that there was room for many different approaches, as long as the philanthropist did not indulge in "indiscriminate charity." He put forward a more instrumental rationale for this ecumenical approach. "It is not expected, neither is it desirable, that there should be general concurrence as to the best possible use of surplus wealth. For different men and different localities there are different uses," he wrote. Instead, the responsibilities of wealth should be interpreted through the prism of the commitment of the steward. "What commends itself most highly to the judgment of the administrator is the best use for him, for his heart should be in the work." This permissiveness has become a central tenet of American voluntarism—and of our tax policy as well—which makes few distinctions or judgments as to what constitutes legitimate philanthropic activity.[60]

[59] A 1923 profile of Eastman in *Hearst's International* was titled, "A Man Who Has Fun with His Wealth." Cited in Martin Morse Wooster, *Should Foundations Live Forever? The Question of Perpetuity* (Washington, DC: Capital Research Center, 1998), 55, note 1. Emily Sanders Hopkins, "The Transformer: Chuck Feeney '56 Champions the Pleasures of Giving While Living," *Ezra Magazine* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2014); Wall, *Andrew Carnegie*, 880, 881; Wooster, *Should Foundations Live Forever?*, 15; Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald*, 131.

[60] Andrew Carnegie, "The Best Fields for Philanthropy," in Carnegie, *"Gospel of Wealth" Essays*, 29.

CHAPTER X

"Giving While Living" as an Institutional Imperative

If "Giving While Living" was initially a personal imperative, stemming from Feeney's own ideas regarding the responsibilities of wealth, it also became an institutional one, with Atlantic incorporating "deliberate advocacy" of "Giving While Living" into its programmatic mission. In March 2003, when John Healy and Feeney unveiled a memo, *The Atlantic Philanthropies Legacy & Purpose*, which sought to sketch out a new strategic direction for the foundation, they included "giving while living" among the fields in which it would work. As they wrote, "It will be a guiding principle of our work to demonstrate the value and benefits of Giving while Living. The intended outcome is to increase the number of philanthropists who distribute their charitable funds while they are alive, and thereby to expand philanthropic funding." Feeney endorsed the aim and helped sway the board to approve the document. Indeed, when Feeney himself spelled out a "Statement of Founder's Intent" the next year, he made clear that he hoped Atlantic's legacy would represent "a testimonial on behalf of giving-while-living."[61]

In August 2004, Healy submitted another memo, based on a package of proposals that he had commissioned from the Bridgespan Group, which explained the rationale for an institutional strategy to encourage "Giving While Living" and detailed what it might look like. "By promoting increased Giving-while-Living," he wrote, "we intend to ensure that the example offered by our founding chairman provides guidance for other wealthy individuals who have the capacity to contribute significantly to solving

[61] McKinsey & Company, *Strategic Change at The Atlantic Philanthropies: Lessons from a 6-Year Journey 1999-2005* (McKinsey & Company, 2006), 13; [John Healy and Chuck Feeney], "The Atlantic Philanthropies Legacy & Purpose," March 12, 2003; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 314; [Chuck Feeney], "Statement of Founder's Intent," July 28, 2004.

today's social problems." He believed the current moment represented an especially propitious one for the inauguration of such a program. Not only did an impending intergenerational transfer of wealth, which some scholars estimated would reach $41 trillion by 2052, loom on the horizon, but the increased media attention on the wealthy and on the attendant responsibilities of wealth would amplify Atlantic's campaign.[62]

[62] John R. Healy, "Recommendations for a Strategy to Encourage Giving-while-Living," August 23, 2004; interview with John Healy, November 3, 2015.

Healy's memo recommended supporting "Giving While Living" over the next decade with an investment from Atlantic of between $50-$100 million. The campaign would be targeted toward the wealthiest Americans (those with a net worth of more than $30 million), and more specifically, toward the "emerging donors," as opposed to the "dormant donors," within that class—i.e., toward those who had already established a pattern of giving but had the potential to give more, as opposed to those who lacked a history of philanthropic commitment. The funds would be used to inspire and motivate large-scale giving—"to chang[e]…the wealthy's mindset regarding philanthropy"—by holding up as models or recognizing philanthropists who were exhibiting the "Giving While Living" values, by publishing materials, by holding celebratory dinners, or by establishing peer networks. Atlantic could also help facilitate giving by building upon an emerging network of research institutions, philanthropic intermediaries and professional advisors which had proliferated in the previous decade, but whose impact had been muted, in Healy's estimation, due to being "subscale, relatively short in duration, or highly personalized." The memo mentioned Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisers, the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard, and Synergos as potential grantees, among others, but also suggested the possibility of creating new institutions.[63]

[63] Atlantic Philanthropies has singled out the Global Philanthropy Forum, established by Jane Wales in 2001 to assist Silicon Valley's new wealth with philanthropy, as a precedent for their efforts to spread "Giving While Living." "Turning Passion into Action," 6. Healy, "Recommendations for a Strategy to Encourage Giving-while-Living"; Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 218.

The Board ultimately decided against the proposals. Yet "deliberate advocacy" of "Giving while Living" was still pursued as a policy over the next decade, if in a less structured format; it was woven into the fabric of Atlantic's very identity, encouraged by the foundation's own dedication to promoting its work, and furthered by a series of grants to bolster philanthropic infrastructure organizations, such as Philanthropy Ireland (awarded nearly $2.5 million from 2002–2016). In many respects, Atlantic's institutional commitment to "Giving While Living" bore the marks of Feeney's personal commitment. A spirit of nonjudgmental pluralism animated it. So in his initial 2004 memo making the case for a formal "Giving While Living" program, John Healy conceded that very little money contributed by the wealthy individuals who would be the likely target of such a campaign would be directed to the sorts of organizations most closely aligned with Atlantic's mission. This might be a drawback, but it wasn't a fatal one, Healy intimated. Indeed, when Atlantic officials spoke of the objectives behind the promotion of "Giving While Living," they tended to do so in quantitative terms; they hoped to increase aggregate philanthropic dollars as opposed to directing funds to particular causes. The assumption was that such allocations were best left to individuals. A 2010 report published by Atlantic, *Turning Passion Into Action: Giving While Living*, featured profiles of Feeney and ten other donors; the diversity of their philanthropic commitments projected one of the main themes of the report: "Giving While Living requires donors to look inward and determine their own motivations, expectations and goals."[64]

Atlantic's campaign to promote "Giving While Living" also came to reflect Feeney's unassuming personality. As Feeney and Healy announced in their 2003 "Legacy and Purpose" memo, "Our efforts to encourage Giving while Living will be pursued in a manner which is in keeping with our desire for a modest and selfless operating style." Obviously, this required maintaining a delicate balance: promoting Feeney's giving and Atlantic's programs as exemplary models, without succumbing to the lure of gratuitous self-promotion. From the moment it emerged from under the cloak of anonymity, the foundation has seemed reluctant to call *too* much attention to itself. As the inaugural Atlantic Philanthropies website announced, the foundation was still "committed to keeping a low profile and not seeking publicity for our organization." Atlantic's leaders initially seemed to hope that its good works would speak for themselves, that they would promote "Giving While Living" by their success and ingenuity. But even as they came to appreciate the limits of such an approach, and the need to develop a more robust communications strategy around "Giving While Living," those closest to Feeney still maintained that Atlantic could publicize its successes, and share its failures, in a modest fashion, by insisting that grantees get pride of place.

How should Atlantic's efforts to promote "Giving While Living" be evaluated? In his 2004 proposal, John Healy had mentioned that there was "some risk that we will not be able to measure success or attribute changes in giving level" to the interventions he recommended. Such simple lines of causation are possible to draw with a handful of individual donors who have been personally moved to greater giving by Feeney's example, such

[64] Information on Philanthropy Ireland taken from Atlantic Philanthropies grants database; Healy, "Recommendations for a Strategy to Encourage Giving-while-Living"; "Turning Passion into Action," 9.

as Amit Chandra, the managing director of Bain Capital in India, who has claimed that Feeney inspired him and his wife to donate the majority of their family's wealth to philanthropy. But in the aggregate, do those individual cases combine to point to a broader transformation of attitudes toward the proper timing and amplitude of giving? Healy imagined the foundation would be able to detect results from a programmatic commitment to promoting "Giving While Living" within five to ten years, but it is likely that definite culture-wide shifts would take much longer; attitudes toward philanthropic responsibility are deeply embedded in social mores and traditions, after all, and are difficult, if not impossible, to dislodge.[65]

Atlantic's experience in Australia, a nation that, until recently, lacked a strong culture of large-scale philanthropy, makes clear this challenge. Earlier in the decade, Atlantic had funded the Council for the Encouragement of Philanthropy in Melbourne but had seen little evidence of success; the Council had attracted only AU$1 million a year during the three years of its funding from Atlantic. Feeney had focused considerable energy on leveraging Atlantic's funds to extract greater commitments from the Australian government, as with the foundation's contributions to the establishment of bioscience research institutions in Queensland. But he began to direct as much of his attention to the nation's wealthiest citizens, adding conditions of private contributions from Australian philanthropists alongside those from federal and state governments that had long been a staple of Atlantic challenge grants. In 2011, Kevin Rudd, the prime minister of Australia, convened a group of high net-worth Australians so that Feeney could discuss "Giving While Living" with them. As Rudd later recalled, the meeting "was a brilliant presentation, and the participants suddenly felt the pressure turning on them. I have never heard such audible clearing of throats as they slunk deeper into their chairs. I'm not sure we loosened a single dollar that day, but it was great fun to watch their reactions to this interesting, mildly disheveled man as he hammered his message home." A few years later, Australia witnessed "a wave of mega-giving" (including several massive bequests).[66]

[65] For an interview with Chandra on his philanthropy, see Cordelia Jenkins, "Philanthropy: The Givers Club," *Live Mint*, August 25, 2013, accessed online at http://www.livemint.com/Specials/vMhPPk6gIoLwmWwfSpmW3N/Philanthropy-the-givers-club.html. "Interview with Christopher Oechsli," *Philanthropy Magazine*, Fall 2014; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 330.

[66] "Australia," in *Laying Foundations for Change*, 265, 271; Healy, "Recommendations for a Strategy to Encourage Giving-while-Living"; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 265; Miriam Steffens, "Philanthropy is Big Business – except in corporate Australia," *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 4, 2011, accessed online at http://www.smh.com.au/business/philanthropy-is-big-business--except-in-corporate-australia-20110603-1fktm.html; Katrina Strickland, "How Big Donations Changed Australian Society," *Australian Financial Review Magazine*, June 26, 2014, accessed online at http://www.afr.com/it-pro/how-big-donations-changed-australian-philanthropy-20140626-j41zd.

CHAPTER XI

Chuck Feeney and the Giving Pledge

Feeney's influence on this surge of giving is difficult to determine. His impact has, in a sense, been enveloped within a broader campaign that Feeney helped to inspire: the Giving Pledge, led by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett, which seeks to recruit billionaires from around the world to commit more than half of their wealth to philanthropy. (The Pledge, for instance, has been cited in helping to bring about the surge in mega-gifts from Australians, with a 2013 visit by Gates to stir up Australian billionaires that built upon Feeney's earlier efforts claiming significant press attention). In the past, other donors have brought together their wealthy peers to discuss their giving, creating networks such as the Global Philanthropists Circle, founded by David Rockefeller and Peggy Dulany, and the Forum for Active Philanthropy in Berlin. What distinguishes the Giving Pledge, and what established its lineage to Atlantic Philanthropies "Giving While Living" campaign, was its combination of the cultivation of a peer network of ultra high-worth individuals with an assertive, educative, even evangelizing mission, to spread the gospel of large-scale giving.[67]

[67] Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 227; Strickland, "How Big Donations Changed Australian Society."

The Giving Pledge emerged out of a series of conversations between Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett around how to get the wealthy to commit more resources—both financial and intellectual—toward philanthropy. Gates and Buffett invited a number of other high net-worth individuals to a meeting hosted by David Rockefeller at Rockefeller University's President's House in New York in May 2009 to continue the discussion. Around a half dozen couples attended, each speaking to the group about their personal experiences with philanthropy. When the event ended, after several hours of discussion, those assembled agreed that it should be broadened to include a larger circle of givers, initiating what *Fortune* magazine called "the biggest fundraising drive in history."

Gates and Buffett sponsored a series of similar meetings. The organizers were galvanized by the idea that the excitement and passion evident in the stories told at the initial gathering were contagious, and that if the enthusiasm was shared, the Pledge organizers could convince other wealthy individuals to more actively engage their philanthropic responsibility. Thus began a campaign to recruit the nation's—and soon the world's—billionaires to commit half of their wealth to philanthropic or charitable causes, before or at death. According to Buffett, the organizers began by personally soliciting those on *Forbes* magazine's list of the 400 richest Americans. Each signatory would be required to make the Pledge publicly, offering a testimonial that told the story of their giving and that would be offered up on the Pledge's website. The Giving Pledge, through an office in the Gates Foundation, would also host annual meetings of the signatories, which would provide a valuable support network, as well as more frequent learning sessions. If the Pledge attracted a "critical mass," as Melinda Gates explained, it could transform the culture of philanthropy worldwide. The editor of *Fortune*, who unveiled the Pledge to the public in June 2010, noted that if the Pledge was successful in bringing on board the members of the *Forbes 400*, it would amount to $600 billion committed to philanthropy, which would represent a massive infusion of resources into the field. The Pledge has not yet taken hold so uniformly across the *Forbes* list, but has had some definite success spreading beyond the United States. To date, there are currently 158 participants in the Giving Pledge, from 17 countries, with an estimated combined net worth of $786 billion.[68]

The Giving Pledge shares a considerable degree of overlap with Feeney's version of "Giving While Living." Both seek to increase philanthropic commitments while remaining agnostic about the causes selected. "Philanthropy is very personal. To us, it doesn't matter what people give, whether it's to the culture or to climate, humanity or societal issues," Melinda Gates explained to the interviewer Charlie Rose. "It's what they're driven by that gets them to give and we just wanted to make sure they are thinking about giving." Or as Bill Gates declared, recalling the range of philanthropic projects discussed at the early convocations he helped to organize: "The

[68] Carol Loomis, "The $600 Billion Challenge," *Fortune*, June 16, 2010, accessed online at http://fortune.com/2010/06/16/the-600-billion-challenge; Charlie Rose, June 5, 2010; http://givingpledge.org/index.html, accessed June 4, 2016; interview with Robert Rosen, May 28, 2015; "Eye on the Giving Pledge," accessed at http://glasspockets.org/philanthropy-in-focus/eye-on-the-giving-pledge; David Callahan, *The Givers: Wealth, Power, and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age* (New York: Knopf, 2017), 19-28.

diversity of American giving is part of its beauty." There is also a strong emphasis on the experiential blessings of philanthropy, on "sharing how much fun it is," as Gates explains. Additionally, "Giving While Living" and the Giving Pledge both regard philanthropy as a public vocation and stress the need for givers to share their experiences in order to attract other potential donors.[69]

[69] *Charlie Rose*, June 5, 2010; Loomis, "The $600 Billion Challenge."

Unsurprisingly, Feeney played a role in the development of the Pledge from its earliest days. Gates, for instance, considered Feeney a personal "hero," and the model he presented of near-total self-dispossession helped convince the Pledge organizers to ask participants that they give away at least half of their total wealth. "That was far from certain going into this, in any shape or form," explains Robert Rosen, who coordinates the Pledge for the Gates Foundation's Office of Philanthropic Partnerships. As Gates wrote in an introduction to a monograph on Atlantic's capital investments, "Chuck's longstanding commitment to Giving While Living has been a guidepost for Melinda and me. Chuck has been a beacon to us for many years; he was living the Giving Pledge long before we launched it." Gates and Buffett invited Feeney to the first conclave of wealthy donors in May 2009 that marked the birth of the campaign. Feeney, alone among the attendees, could claim the distinction of having the conversation be a retrospective one: he had given away more than half his wealth *already*. Precisely for this reason, Feeney at first declined to officially join the Pledge, since he could not commit in the future what had already been committed, a decision that, according to a member of Gates's staff, "devastated" the Pledge organizer.[70]

[70] Ironically, the man known for his commitment to anonymity and his insistence on confidentiality surrounding his foundation's operation was likely responsible for leaking reports of this initial meeting to the press. Feeney's friend Niall O'Dowd broke the story of the meeting on his web publication, *IrishCentral.com*. Afterwards, the organizers of the Pledge insisted on a "cone of silence" around all its proceedings. O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 384; Loomis, "The $600 Billion Challenge." Interview with Robert Rosen; Bill Gates, "Introduction," in *Laying Foundations for Change*, 23; Loomis, "$600 Billion Challenge"; O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 382-386.

There were, perhaps, deeper reasons for Feeney's resistance that expose some of his lingering anxieties regarding the public dimensions of "Giving While Living." Chris Oechsli, for instance, explains Feeney's ambivalence to signing the Pledge by suggesting that he "is not a joiner. He takes real pleasure in doing, not talking about it." And yet he also added that Feeney did hope to inspire others to give. Additionally, Feeney recognized the divergences between the Pledge's conditions and his understanding of "Giving While Living." The former, most significantly, does not make a strong endorsement of "timeliness"; it does not require donors to give now rather than later (though the Pledge organizers have stated a preference for *inter vivos* giving). As Melinda Gates explained during an interview with Charlie Rose shortly after the Giving Pledge was unveiled, they considered the metric of success for the Pledge to be "getting people earlier in life *to think* about how they are going to give their money back, whether it is during their lifetimes or whether it's at their death." And when Buffett explained to Rose what he hoped the Pledge might achieve in a decade, he pointed to an increase in charitable bequests, as revealed on estate tax forms. Additionally, there are no accountability or enforcement mechanisms behind the Pledge and Feeney worried that many signatories would embrace it simply as a public relations stunt. Unlike his own fateful decision in 1984 to transfer his wealth to his foundation, the pledges would not be irrevocable. And the potential to satisfy the pledge through a bequest provided a release from public pressure on the living donor to make good on his or her commitment. Feeney's reservations seemed to have some merit; a 2015 investigation of the ten deceased billionaires who had signed the Pledge revealed that several left considerably less than half their net worth to charitable causes.[71]

Ultimately, though Feeney was concerned that the Giving Pledge would not give a significant boost to "Giving While Living," he was worried that he had been too hasty in his rejection of it and asked for a private meeting with Gates. One was set for January 2011, in Seattle. During the meeting, Gates remarked that when he had first started the campaign two years before, he had looked to Feeney as the leader of the effort. Because of his exemplary status, Gates urged Feeney to sign, despite his reservations. "You set the best example of all," he told him. "You were way, way ahead of all of us."[72]

Feeney continued to demur about signing, but promised to help with the effort. Gates then invited him to attend a meeting of the Pledge participants in May, in Tucson; Feeney agreed and addressed a group of some forty philanthropists on his own experiences. "I know I learned a lot," recalled Gates, "and many of the other pledgers talked about how great it was to hear from someone who has a great passion for philanthropy and doesn't just talk about giving while living but has really put it into practice." After the meeting, Warren Buffett spoke to reporters and called Feeney the spiritual leader of the group.[73]

Sometime over the next few months, Feeney finally relented and in February 2012, he became the 59th participant in the Pledge. In signing, he took the opportunity to push other current and future Pledge signatories in the direction of his understanding of "Giving While Living." He promoted

[71] Some observers have pointed out that Bill Gates himself could use more urgency in his giving pace. According to the *New York Times*, the Gates's gave $3.7 billion to their foundation between 2002 and 2012, even as Bill Gates's net worth skyrocketed to more than $80 billion. Commentators such as David Callahan have questioned why such a small fraction of Gates's fortune is being directed toward philanthropy and urged him to take more of his money off the "sidelines." David Callahan, "Bill and Melinda Gates Have a Big Vision. So Why Aren't They Writing Bigger Checks?" *Inside Philanthropy*, January 27, 2015, accessed online at http://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2015/1/22/bill-and-melinda-gates-have-a-big-vision-so-why-arent-they-w.html. Christopher G. Oechsli, "Foreword," in *Laying Foundations for Change*, 21; *Charlie Rose*, June 5, 2010 (italics my own); Brendan Coffey, "Pledge Aside, Dead Billionaires Don't Have to Give Away Half Their Fortunes," *Bloomberg*, June 4, 2015, accessed online at http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-06-04/as-billionaires-bask-in-glow-of-pledge-giving-half-is-optional.

[72] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 385-386.

[73] O'Clery, *Billionaire Who Wasn't*, 390.

that ethic in his own testimonial, stressing the need for philanthropists to engage their giving "with the same acumen, creativity and tenacity that many of us learned and applied in our business careers," and added a measure of immediacy that is at times missing in the rhetoric of deliberation and learning associated with the Pledge.

> "I cannot think of a more personally rewarding and appropriate use of wealth than to give while one is living - to personally devote oneself to meaningful efforts to improve the human condition. More importantly, today's needs are so great and varied that intelligent philanthropic support and positive interventions can have greater value and impact today than if they are delayed when the needs are greater. I urge those who are taking up the Giving Pledge example to invest substantially in philanthropic causes soon and not postpone their giving or personal engagement."[74]

[74] Charles F. Feeney to Bill Gates, February 3, 2011.