

**Philanthropy** is a long-standing **American tradition** dating back to the early days of settlement when the first colonists had to build everything—roads, schools, hospitals—from scratch (à partir de rien) on a voluntary basis (à titre bénévole). The most famous philanthropist in the nineteenth century was probably **Andrew Carnegie**, a penniless Scottish immigrant who went on to become a fabulously wealthy industrialist. He gave away most of his money to establish libraries, schools and universities in the US and the UK. Today, **Bill Gates**, the founder of Microsoft and of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, **Warren Buffett**, a successful financier, are among the best-known philanthropists. In December 2015 the **Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg** and his wife announced they would give 99% of their Facebook shares to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a company whose aim is to “advance human potential and promote equality in areas such as health, education, scientific research and energy”. It is worth noting that the company is not a charity and that Zuckerberg will still control the Facebook shares it receives even if he will be allowed to deduct the value of his donation from his taxable income each year.

Jean-Max Thomson, *The Big Picture* p140

## VIDEO

Bill Gates pledges to give away \$200 billion by 2045 (Reuters)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOOm\\_WqPpNA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOOm_WqPpNA)



# Why Bill Gates's Philanthropy Is a Problem

*The Nation* (progressive / left-leaning), November 22, 2023

Thousands of news stories have profiled Bill Gates's generosity over the last two decades. Essentially every day, headlines remind us of his private foundation's largesse: a million dollars here, a billion dollars there. These are mind-bending sums for most of us—but they have also effectively short-circuited our brains. **The one-sided storytelling about Gates's selfless philanthropy has created a dangerous mythology that misunderstands who Bill Gates really is and what he is actually doing.**

After two decades of philanthropic giving, Bill Gates continues to be one of the richest people on the planet. He boasts a private fortune of [\\$117 billion](#) (and that's after his costly divorce from Melinda, whose bank account today exceeds [\\$10 billion](#)). He also oversees the Gates Foundation's [\\$67 billion endowment](#). The combined \$184 billion he controls surpasses the gross domestic product of virtually every poor nation in which the Gates Foundation works today.

**A sober analysis of Gates shows he is just as worthy of the titles of hoarder and miser (avare) as he is philanthropist and mensch (bonne personne).** Relative to his vast wealth, Gates is giving away a tiny amount of money—that he doesn't need and that he could never possibly spend on himself. So the question is: Instead of celebrating the million-dollar gifts his foundation donates, why aren't we interrogating the \$184 billion that Gates *isn't* giving away? **Why aren't we asking: How is it that the world's most generous philanthropist is becoming richer and richer, year over year?**

Full article : <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/bill-gates-philanthropy-misanthropy/>



## Patagonia: Billionaire boss gives fashion firm away to fight climate change

BBCNews, 15 September 2022

The billionaire founder of the outdoor fashion brand Patagonia has given away his company to a charitable trust.

Yvon Chouinard said any profit not reinvested in running the business would go to fighting climate change.

The label has amassed a cult following due to sustainability moves like guaranteeing its clothes for life and offering reasonably priced repairs.

It is famous for an advert titled "Don't buy this jacket" asking shoppers to consider costs to the environment.

The brand's website now states: "Earth is now our only shareholder."

**DON'T BUY  
THIS JACKET**



Founded in 1973, Patagonia's sales were worth around \$1.5bn this year, while Mr Chouinard's net worth is thought to be \$1.2bn.

But he has always shied away from his wealthy status, telling the New York Times he was "horrified to be seen as a billionaire".

He claimed that profits to be donated to climate causes will amount to around \$100m (£87m) a year, depending on the health of the company.

"Despite its immensity, the Earth's resources are not infinite, and it's clear we've exceeded its limits," the entrepreneur said of his decision to give up ownership.

The firm's marketing campaigns - focused around asking people to buy only what they need - have not dampened sales and critics have argued by raising its prominence it has encouraged more spending rather than less.

Prices are relatively high with jumpers, for example, costing around £200 and T-shirts around £40, but the company argues that the cost reflects the fact its clothes are meant to last a lifetime.

Patagonia's chairman, Charles Conn, acknowledged the higher prices but said cheap fast fashion was "anathema" to the brand.

## People who have donated their wealth

- Microsoft founder Bill Gates this year vowed to "drop off" the world's rich list as he made a \$20bn donation to his philanthropic fund. The tech boss, who is thought to be worth \$118bn, had pledged to give his wealth away to charity in 2010 but his net worth has more than doubled since then.
- Last year the boss of the Hut Group, which owns a range of online beauty and nutrition brands, donated £100m to a charitable foundation after becoming a billionaire when his firm was listed. Matthew Moulding said of his newfound wealth that he "couldn't even comprehend the numbers" and was trying to make a difference.
- In 2019, Julian Richer who founded hi-fi chain Richer Sounds handed over 60% of the business to staff

But it's still pretty hard to save the planet, if your business depends on selling stuff, however many recycled or renewable products you use.

By **ringfencing (réserver)** future profits for environmental causes, Patagonia's founder Yvon Chouinard has done his best to **square that circle (= solve a difficult problem)**.

But he is also clearly trying to ensure that Patagonia brand is future-proofed and can never fall into the hands of the kind of companies he has accused of **greenwashing** in the past.

And if that doesn't appeal to wealthy outdoorsy types with a social conscience, nothing will.

## VOCABULARY

The rich\_\_ / the poor \_\_ = les riches / les pauvres

Misery = le malheur

To be miserable = être malheureux

Poverty / destitution = la misère

Destitute / underprivileged [ʌndə'prɪvəlɪdʒd] / badly-off = pauvre / défavorisé

Wealthy / affluent / well-off = riche / aisé

The haves / the have-nots = les nantis / les démunis

To start from scratch = partir de zéro / de rien

To go from rags to riches = faire fortune en partant de rien

To work one's way out of poverty = se sortir de la pauvreté grâce à son travail

A charity = une œuvre de bienfaisance

Welfare = l'aide sociale

The Welfare State = l'Etat Providence

Welfare benefits = les aides sociales

An allowance [ə'laʊəns] = une allocation

A two-tier society = une société à deux vitesses

Homeless = sans abri

To be on the street(s) = être à la rue

The underclass = population vivant en marge de la société / les "déclassés"

standard of living, living-standards GDP [dʒi:di:'pi:] per head, per inhabitant lifestyle, way of life buying power, spending power, purchasing power ['pɜ:tʃaɪzɪŋ paʊə]	le niveau de vie le PIB par tête, par habitant mode de vie le pouvoir d'achat
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In 1987 there were 140 **billionaires** worldwide. In 2024 there were 2,781, 19 times as many as in 1987, and they're richer than ever, worth \$14.2 trillion in aggregate. According to a 2022 report by Oxfam, a British charity, the world's billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 percent of the planet's population.

rich, wealthy wealth well-off well-to-do well-heeled [wel hi:ld] to be affluent affluence the affluent society ['æfluənt sə'saɪətɪ]	riche la richesse aisé nant fortuné être nanti, vivre dans l'aisance la richesse, l'abondance la société d'abondance
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**Affluenza** is a portmanteau word composed of "affluence" and "influenza" (*grippe*) and refers to the condition of people, mostly in rich Western countries, who feel unfulfilled (*insatisfaits, frustrés*) and dissatisfied in spite of their growing wealth. There is evidence showing that levels of happiness in rich countries have not increased over the past fifty years even though material well-being (*bien-être*) has soared as a result of economic growth.

rich people, the rich riches [rɪtʃɪz] the super-rich, the mega-rich stinking rich in moneyed circles	les riches des richesses les grandes fortunes bourré de fric, plein aux as parmi les nantis, les possédants
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a millionaire [ˌmɪljə'neəʃ] a dollar millionaire a billionaire a zillionaire, a multimillionaire an oil magnate ['mæɡneɪt] a press baron a media mogul ['mæʊɡəl] an oil / a software tycoon [taɪ'ku:n]	un millionnaire un millionnaire en dollars un milliardaire un multimilliardaire un magnat du pétrole un baron de la presse un magnat des médias un roi du pétrole / des logiciels
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A **golden parachute** is a large amount of money given to someone when they leave their job; in British English it is also called a **golden handshake**.

income income tax a tax haven ['heɪvən] tax evasion [t'vɛɪʒən] to stash money away money-laundering high-income / low-income families a taxpayer earnings	le revenu l'impôt sur le revenu un paradis fiscal la fraude fiscale planquer de l'argent le blanchiment d'argent familles à hauts / bas revenus un contribuable les gains
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poverty	la pauvreté
poor people, the poor	les pauvres
the working poor	les travailleurs pauvres
poor, impoverished	pauvre
the needy	les nécessiteux, les indigents
extreme poverty, dire ['daɪə'] poverty	la misère
destitution [ˌdɛstɪ'tjuːʃən]	le dénuement, la misère noire
the most destitute	les plus démunis
to fall on hard times, to become destitute	tomber dans la misère
to sink into poverty	somber dans la pauvreté
below / above the poverty line	en-dessous / au-dessus du seuil de pauvreté

a low-income household	un ménage à revenu modeste
deprived [dɪ'praɪvd], disadvantaged, underprivileged	défavorisé
to live on \$2 a day	vivre avec deux dollars par jour
to live on the benefit (GB), on welfare (US)	vivre d'allocations
pauperism	le paupérisme
pauperization	la paupérisation

inequality [ˌɪnɪ'kwɒlɪti]	l'inégalité
unequal [ˌʌn'ɪːkwəl], uneven	inégal
to share	partager
to share out	répartir
the distribution of wealth	la répartition de la richesse
a two-tier society [tɪə']	une société à deux vitesses
the social fabric	le tissu social

the gap between rich and poor	le fossé entre les riches et les pauvres
the gap between the haves and the have-nots	la fracture sociale
to bridge, to close the gap	combler le fossé
the gap is closing, narrowing	le fossé se comble
the gap is widening	le fossé se creuse
the social divide	le fossé social, la fracture sociale
a discrepancy	un écart
a chasm ['kæzəm]	un gouffre, un abîme
balance / imbalance	l'équilibre / le déséquilibre
balanced / unbalanced	équilibré / déséquilibré
to redress the balance	rétablir l'équilibre

Jean-Max Thomson – *The Big Picture* – Vocabulaire de l'actualité en anglais – 7<sup>e</sup> édition, Ellipses, 2024

