Andrew Carnegie’s Argument on the Uses of Great Fortunes

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Carnegie was a firm believer in giving wealth away during one’s lifetime. It is clear from his quote: “the man who dies thus rich dies disgraced” [1] (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2025). Carnegie’s essay is simply a way to show that people can have a balance between fairness and individualism. The gospel of wealth is a distribution of wealth and responsibilities that wealthy people have toward society (Shekhtman et al., 2022). Proper administration of wealth can be challenging at times; for this reason, Carnegie proposes three ways to dispose of surplus wealth.

He gives three modes of disposing of surplus wealth (Jones, 2024). The first one is to leave it with the family. Mostly, the sons who inherit the family wealth waste it, and most are destroyed by the money. However, there are exceptional cases where the sons use the wealth for the greater good (Manistee News Advocate, 2025). Secondly, the wealth can be bequeathed for public use. The last way that Carnegie gave for disposing of the wealth was by distributing it during one’s lifetime. According to Carnegie, leaving the fortune to the family is for the purpose of maintaining family pride. Regarding leaving the wealth to the public, the author says that the wealthy person has to wait until he dies to leave his fortune to the public. The only remaining mode is disposing of it so that it can help the whole community at large. Giving money to people who do not have anything is a waste because they would fritter the money away. Thus, Carnegie concluded that the fortune should go to public projects and people who could help themselves.

Citing examples from the essay, in what ways does Carnegie make his argument as persuasive as possible? Do you agree with his argument?

Carnegie makes his arguments persuasive by putting emphasis on how important it is to give one’s wealth to the community. “…and this wealth passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves” [2]. In this statement, the author justifies how beneficial it will be to pass wealth to the community. The author believes that no one rises from their social class, but they can have a higher quality of life. The only way to do this is by giving their wealth to help community members. Carnegie has a belief that it is not possible to transition from one class to another. Carnegie

recommends using the three modes of disposing of surplus wealth. It is all about giving away the wealth wisely. I agree with Carnegie's argument about giving one's wealth to the public. Using this method to dispose of the wealth will be beneficial not only to a few people but to the whole community.

Using evidence from the essay and/or textbook, explain why you agree or disagree with his argument

The majority of wealthy people spend their wealth lavishly. Instead of doing this, it would be better if such individuals used their wealth wisely and helped bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Carnegie's main argument was that the wealthy must live in a modest manner and must use their fortunes to elevate civilization. I agree with the argument. First of all, the author says that wealth will be the property of many [3]. Thus, society will benefit from an individual's wealth. Such wealth will become more beneficial for society than if it were used and distributed to many people. It will be more valuable to distribute the wealth in a way that will help everybody in the community and not only the chosen few. Carnegie asserts that the masses will reap the principal benefit if the wealth is used for public purposes [4]. Disposing of wealth for public use will make the wealthy person gain respect in society. I also agree with Carnegie that a man of wealth should not be extravagant and should help uplift those who are poor. Administering wealth for the community is better than just using it to better oneself. Sharing wealth with the community is a way to help improve the community in terms of improving the inhabitants' quality of life. A country's economy will also improve if only a few wealthy people decide to share their wealth for the good of the community. Additionally, giving wealth to the public will also be in accordance with the Bible, which talks about sharing one's wealth with others.

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