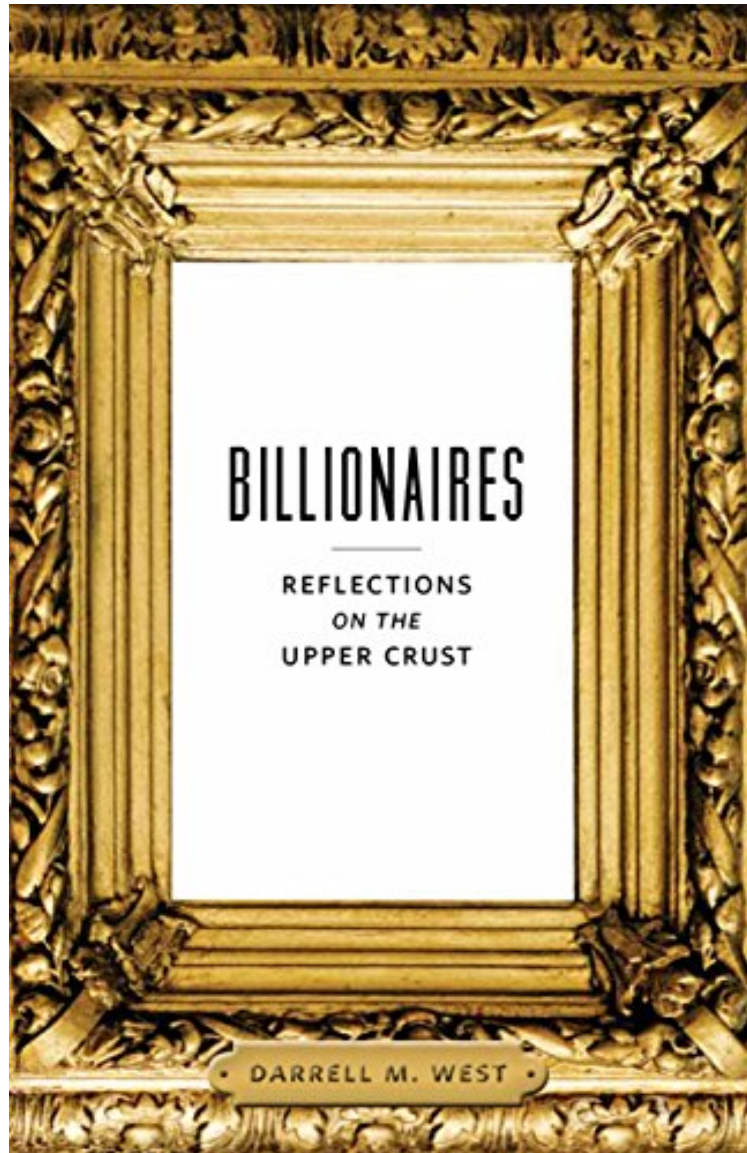


(Free read ebook) Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust

Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust

Darrell M. West

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Darrell M. West : Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Informative and thought provoking By Mark Rhodes This book is packed with information about billionaires, including their political and philanthropic activities. The author discusses the data in some detail, including his analysis of many of the impacts of increasing wealth inequality and his recommendations to mitigate some of the negative impacts to democratic processes. Thoughtful consideration is given to both the positive and negative impacts of billionaires and the economic inequalities they represent. A thoughtful and

well written treatise of an important aspect of our current economic situation. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Too Thin! By David P. Racin I was hoping for a more in-depth examination of the role of extreme wealth in society. But the actual details of wealthy influence were sparse and seemed mainly to come from available news accounts. No original research here. Mostly, the book is a somewhat superficial argument for a set of policy proposals. They may be the right proposals; they just don't emerge naturally from the thin narrative. 15 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Superb overview, illuminates not just the negatives, but the positives as well. By Robert David STEELE Vivas I bought this book in part because I have noticed a number of billionaires giving away \$100 million to \$500 million "chunks" to universities and non-profits that in my view are perpetuating what Russell Ackoff would call "doing the wrong things righter;" in part because I myself am looking for someone to fund a School of Future-Oriented Hybrid Governance and a World Brain Institute; and in part because I have been utterly fascinated to see the 1% breaking ranks in the last three months, with a few of them, notably the Mars Family in the USA (Mutuality Economics), a few black sheep billionaires on the West Coast (Redemptive Economics) and Lady Rothschild in London (Inclusive Economics), all realizing that 100% corrupt governments are not working as they anticipated. For me, this is a five star work. Certainly more can be done in this area, but in terms of researched detail and a coherent construct for the book over-all, I find nothing lacking. The central focus of the book is not on the fact that the 1% have achieved their goal of assuring 100% corrupt governments (the USA and the UK being right at the top of that list) but rather on illuminating how the 1% have "pioneered new activist models of political involvement that combine electioneering, issue advocacy, and [directed] philanthropy." What this means is that the super-rich are controlling not just the media, but state and local government, university departments and secondary school curricula, and most civil society discourse. I find the diplomatic tone of the author admirable, and his findings incontrovertible -- the super-rich are polarizing societies, destroying economies, neutering governments, dumbing down the schools and the public, and generally threatening the larger ecology of humanity on Earth with extinction. The author documents quite clearly the chasm between the policy views of the super-rich (that I would point out are rooted in privileged ideology, not ethical evidence-based decision-support of which I am a champion) and those of the 99%. I learn from this book. Three small points -- there are many others -- are these: 01. Buying one single Senator can put the entire US Government into grid-lock on any issue, with secret holds and other measures essentially short-circuiting all of the checks and balances. 02. The legalized tax loopholes and subsidies are roughly, at 925 billion a year, equivalent to the one trillion a year that the US Government borrows in our name instead of creating our own credit. 03. The estate tax aka the death tax has been practically eliminated with new loopholes that exclude up to \$5 million, at the same time that the super-rich have legalized almost 100% tax avoidance on all of their wealth through various means. Amidst all this negativity -- no more than 50% of the book -- are many positive stories of billionaires trying to do the right thing, rooted in their general sense, as discussed by the author, that the "status quo" is simply not good. This is consistent with recent findings from Oxford University, as reported to The New Story Summit at Findhorn in Scotland where I was this past week, to the effect that an astonishing (my word) number of CEOs are disheartened, know they need to shift their empires a 180 degrees, but feel helpless and unknowing about how to do that. My own notes pull out sixteen specific billionaires, led by Tom Steyer who is spending \$100 billion on climate change education, who merit respect for trying to do the right thing. Many others are listed throughout the book and documented in the notes; the author has engaged many of his subjects directly and woven an excellent story. HOWEVER, Tom Steyer and Michael Bloomberg and all others including Bill Gates -- are completely lacking in their approach to policy and philanthropy one issue at a time. Not a single one of them has come to grips with the need to integrate holistic analytics, true cost economics, and open source everything engineering (visit Earth Intelligence Network and Phi Beta Iota the Public Intelligence Blog for insights into that emergent transformative game changing tri-fecta). In passing I would note that there are no schools teaching this tri-fecta, and the business schools are especially remiss in failing to focus on the urgency of communicating to their students the need for a craft of intelligence able to produce ethical evidence-based decision-support. The author also falls to this limitation; his call for changes in education and health care are delimited by his failing to see that meta-design changes are needed such that we eliminate weapons of mass instruction being used to deliberately dumb down the public, while also eliminating the 50% waste that characterizes how we do everything from agriculture to energy to health to the military. That is my only critical comment. Normally I would conclude with links to other related books I have read and reviewed (e.g. Griftopia: A Story of Bankers, Politicians, and the Most Audacious Power Grab in American History and Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making, but there are just too many of them, instead I will point the reader to my Review Page at Phi Beta Iota, where my lists of lists are easily exploited. Below are books the author recommends that I have not read but am considering purchasing. Bottlenecks: A New Theory of Equal Opportunity Capital in the Twenty-First Century Giving 2.0: Transform Your Giving and Our World The Political Economy of Human Happiness: How Voters' Choices Determine the Quality of Life Why Philanthropy Matters: How the Wealthy Give, and What It Means for Our Economic Well-Being I strongly recommend this book for citizens, students, and anyone interested in understanding both why the US and global economies are subject to what the Argentine President has just called the "economic terrorism of the 1%," and how *much* money could be mustered from good-hearted billionaires who simply lack

integral consciousness and a coherent construct for rescuing all of us from our own apathy. Best wishes to all, Robert David STEELE Vivas INTELLIGENCE FOR EARTH: Clarity, Diversity, Integrity, Sustainability

Meet the Billionaires: the 1,645 men and women who control a massive share of global assets worth \$6.5 trillion. Darrell West reveals what the other 99.99998% of us need to know. With rich anecdotes and personal narratives, West goes inside the world of the ultra wealthy. Meet U.S. billionaires such as Sheldon Adelson, Michael Bloomberg, David and Charles Koch, George Soros, Tom Steyer, and Donald Trump; as well as international billionaires from around the globe. The growing political engagement of this small supra-wealthy group raises important questions about influence, transparency, and government performance, and West lays bare the wealthification of politics, including: How billionaires can block appointments and legislation they don't like; Why the supra-wealthy moved into policy advocacy and referenda at the state level; Why billionaires run for office in more than a dozen countries around the world

"F. Scott Fitzgerald taught us that the very rich are different from the rest of us. Now Darrell West has taken us on a thoughtful romp through the world of our new billionaire class. At a moment when we have read both glorifications and denunciations of those with unimaginably large fortunes, West has set out to understand and explain who they are and what they do. He couples a moral concern for the cost of rising inequality with a scholar's commitment to telling the story straight. This is both an important book and a good read." —E.J. Dionne, Georgetown University "As a free-market conservative who hopes to see more money invested in politics, not less, I disagree with many of Darrell West's attitudes and arguments. His book BILLIONAIRES is nonetheless a fresh, thought-provoking, clear-eyed view of a bitterly controversial subject, demonstrating that the prominent participation of plutocrats in politics is a worldwide, and not just American, phenomenon. Even those who reject West's conclusions will enjoy the crisp, readable, and passionately personal style he deploys to make his points." —Michael Medved, nationally syndicated talk radio host "In the United States and across the world, billionaires are front and center in politics -- running for office, bankrolling campaigns and lobbies, pushing policy messages. With a riveting mix of facts and stories, Darrell West tells us who these new plutocrats are, what they think about politics, and how they maneuver to get what they want. West faces the tough ethical issues, too, and asks whether watchdogs can still bark at billionaires operating in secret. BILLIONAIRES is a must read for all who care about the future of democracy." —Theda Skocpol, Harvard University "The saddest sight in American politics is a U.S. Senator begging a billionaire for his crumbs." —Chris Matthews, MSNBC's Hardball "Are the super-wealthy different from you and me?' asks Darrell West. Different or not, they are shaping our world, sometimes for the better (when they invent new things), but often for the worse, when they undermine democracy, use government to enrich themselves, and create a culture of social separatism and uber-success. Unless you are indifferent to this new world, you should read West's book." —Branko Milanovic, author of The Haves and the Have-Nots: A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality About the Author Darrell West is vice president and director of Governance Studies at Brookings, where he is the founding director of the Center for Technology Innovation. His previous books include Digital Schools: How Technology Can Transform Education and Brain Gain: Rethinking U.S. Immigration Policy.