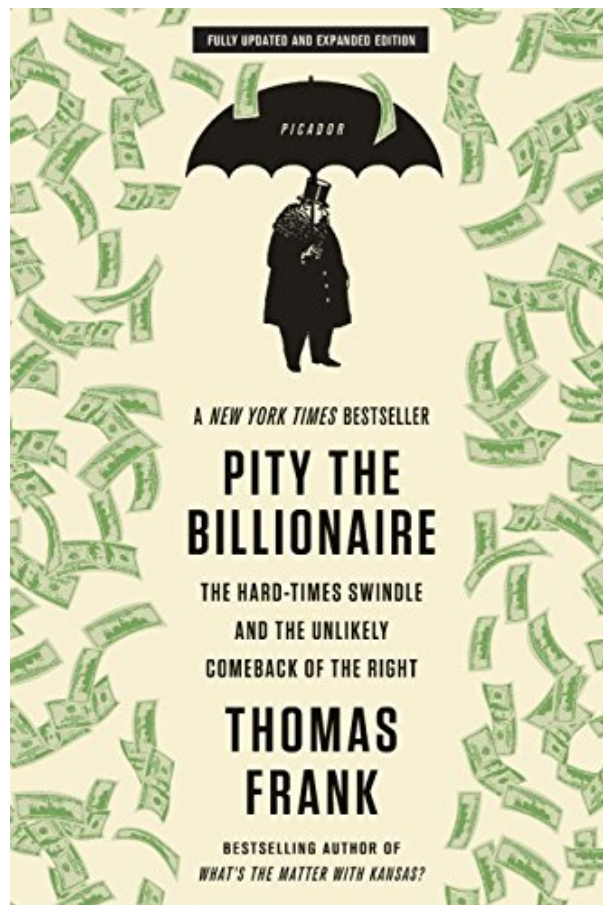
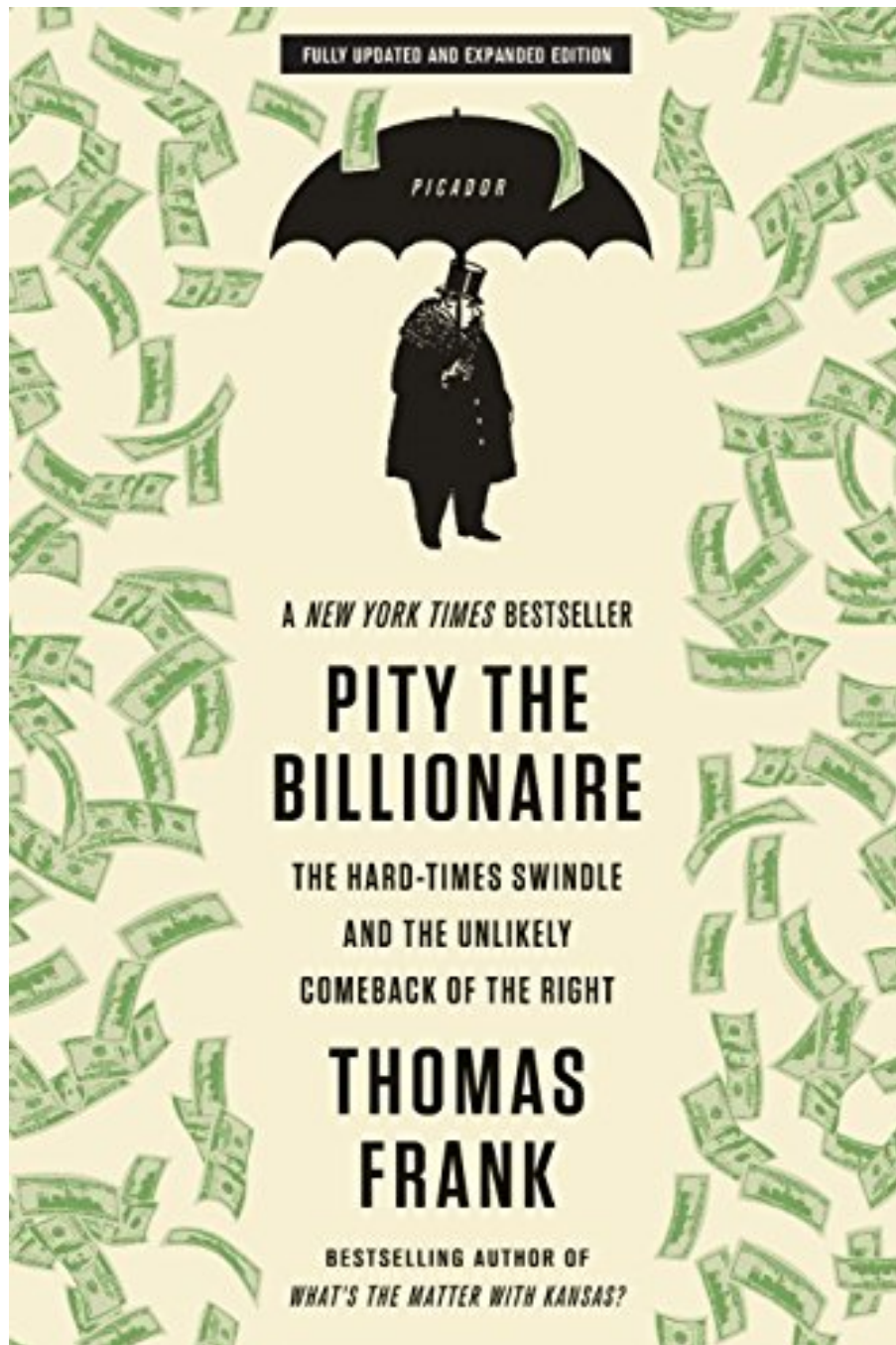


PITY THE BILLIONAIRE: THE HARD-TIMES SWINDLE AND THE UNLIKELY COMEBACK OF THE RIGHT BY THOMAS FRANK



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A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice

From the bestselling author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, this witty and highly provocative book asks a simple question: How is it possible that the disastrous collapse of the free market economy in 2008 could have heralded a popular revival of the right?

In *Pity the Billionaire*, a brilliant, funny, and disturbing tour de force, Thomas Frank analyzes the sleight of hand involved in the right's resurgence—all the upside-down grievances that have transformed economic suffering into valentines for the rich and powerful. This great chronicler of American paradox dissects the contradictions at the heart of the country's politics, and in this "dazzling" book once again shows himself as "one of the best left-wing writers America has produced" (*The Guardian*).

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- Used Book in Good Condition

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reading zoologist Dian Fossey on a group of strange political primates.” ?The Washington Post

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5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Our number one social critic

By Mary Ellen Johnson

What is there not to love about Thomas Frank and his work? A brilliant vocabulary, a snarky and always effective way of mocking both sides, and a laser-like way of cutting through all the b.s. and obfuscation to the core of our societal and economic problems. While Frank is an unashamed liberal, in the best, old-fashioned sense of the word, he is harder on today's neo and faux liberals than he is on their opposite. At least the right is effective. At least the right has core convictions. The left, or what passes for the left today, does not.

Pity the Billionaire explains why, rather than a return to enlightened and effective policies of the thirties following the great recession, America has jerked even farther to the right. And as Frank would say, "The fault, gentle readers, rests with those who do the bidding of their fat cat friends -- that is, the Democrats." If you stand for nothing, anything, no matter how absurd on its face--and Frank points out how absurd is the populism emerging from the likes of Freedom works and Glenn Beck--will prevail.

Only a true idealist could be as splendidly cynical as Thomas Frank. While his prose at times is laugh out loud funny, beneath it lurks a most rare and admirable quality, the belief that words do matter and that standing up to the billionaires and their buds can return America to at least a modicum of compassion, fairness and equality. I am so grateful that Thomas Frank has not become so disheartened as to simply give up and go away.

Please continue fighting, Thomas, giving a voice to people like me who increasingly think, Why bother? That fighting the insane right with a flabby, corrupted political party that has long since lost its way is an exercise in self-torture. Perhaps it is. But so long as you keep on writing and keep on skewering our politicians and exhorting us weary liberals to keep on fighting, the least I can do is to embrace your grace and passion and tenacity with a measure of my own.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Hard Time Swindles by the One Percent

By William A. Barrett

Thomas Frank's three books on the great economic divide in America, and how we got there, ranks among my favorites in understanding how the billionaires of America managed to get majorities of Americans to vote against their own best interests. 'Pity the Billionaire' is the third in his series. 'What's the Matter with Kansas' the first, and 'The Wrecking Crew' the second. Start with Kansas, then The Wrecking Crew, both written while George W. Bush was president, and busy wrecking our federal social protections. Much the same mechanism is still in play, as Frank shows in his Pity the Billionaire book, only updated a bit to include how the Tea party arose and is funded.

For the psychological/neurological underpinnings of the radical conservative mind, read some of George Lakoff's works, for example, 'The Political Mind'. Lakoff contends that the model radical conservative was born into a male-dominated and structured household ruled by a tough-love father, whose mantra is obedience to those above you in the social ladder, and unthinking acceptance of the wisdom of the free market.

OK, you are not a political junky. But, you must be puzzled by why so many Congressional districts have sent so many politicians to Congress whose sole function is to obstruct and destroy the machinery of government - except for its military and police functions, and its big subsidies to powerful corporations. It's

rather like voting for council members running on a platform of hiring arsonists as firemen, and sadists and killers as policemen.

How your tax dollars are spent is important, of course. But - more important - our democracy is at stake. What we are rapidly approaching in the U.S. is a plutocracy of the rich, a kind of plantation society in which a few (the upper 1%) live in luxury doing nothing but watching their investments grow, while the rest of us slave in the heat and the dust of the cotton fields. We still have one person, one vote, so how did the top 1% manage to swindle so many votes for their chosen politicians out of us? You are almost surely among the victims, but have you also voted for your own oppressors?

Aren't we better than that? You can figure out the game we are in, and use the power of your vote to change the situation. It doesn't matter whether you are a registered Democrat or Republican - understanding the real forces that are shaping our nation, and how to deal with them, is an issue for us all.

But will you make the effort? The price is a few hours reading these books - check your local library, if your town still has one. Or look for electronic or used editions. However, let's not cheat Frank out of his well deserved royalties - buy a new hard cover copy and a few for your friends, if you can afford it out of your stagnant wages.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Good book but no new insights

By Paul Tauberg

Towards the end of "Pity the Billionaire", Thomas Frank asks his readers whether they had fun so far following him poking big holes in the right wingers' absurdist arguments. My answer would be: yes, but... Yes, because indeed, he is mercilessly mocking conservative republicans and ideologues while giving us a sort of play by play account of their behaviour during and after the big economic crisis of 2008. But, because Frank repeats many of themes of "What's the matter with Kansas" that are no longer big news to many of us. We understand how the right wing ideological ascendance has conditioned people to vote against their own economic interests and to believe that their oppressors deserve even more power. The problem is that, as a liberal reader, is hard to go again through so many pages without thinking that you would rather read about some solutions. No amount of sarcasm leveled at Glen Beck or Sarah Palin can be a substitute for that.

In fairness, again towards the end, Thomas Frank has some criticism for President Obama's timidity and suggests that some things might have happened differently if different approaches would have been taken. Even so, his own diagnosis of the crisis is a bit too timid. He honestly believes that the 2008 crisis was caused by mischievous Wall Street traders taking advantage of weak regulations. That position ignores the elephant in the room, namely that, in the last 30 years, capital and trade globalization have hollowed US of middle class jobs, reduced the tax base, depressed the median income and created dramatic economic and social frictions for which the 2008 crisis is just one of the symptoms. After all, Wall Street traders were always greedy and will always be.

Overall a good and recommended read for people who have not read yet "What's the matter with Kansas"

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