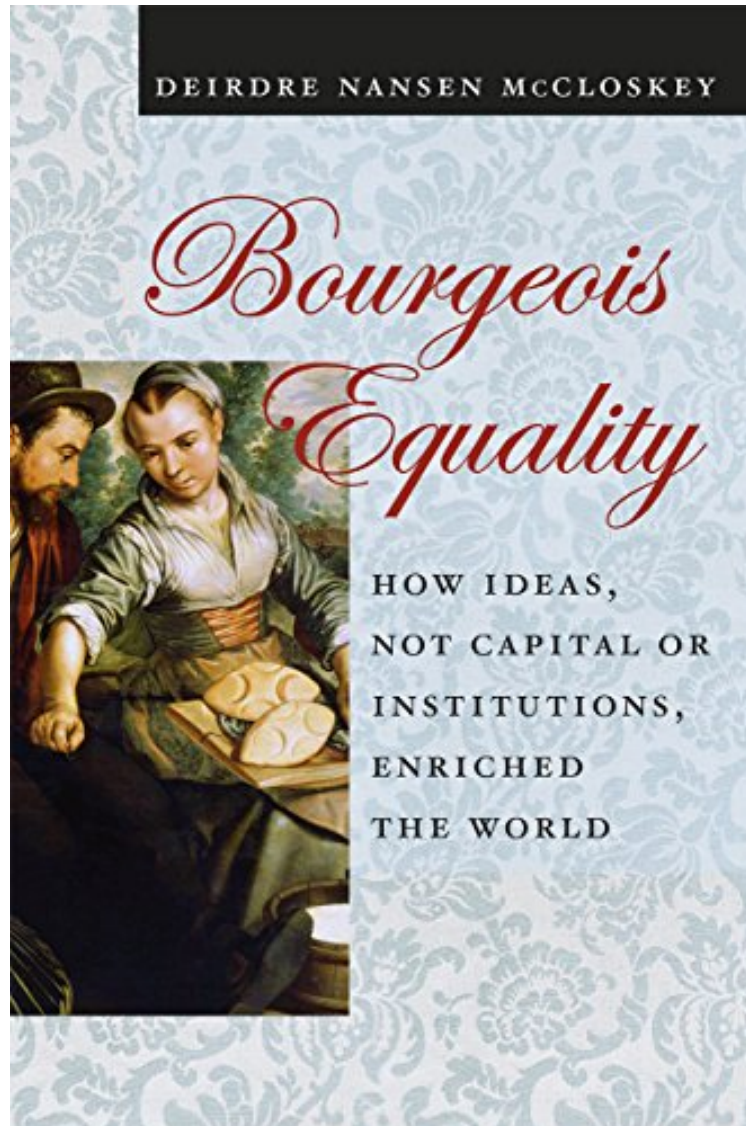


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Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World

Deirdre N. McCloskey

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Deirdre N. McCloskey : Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Bourgeois Equality: How Ideas, Not Capital or Institutions, Enriched the World:

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...By Henry Oliner Brilliant analysis of the great enrichment that has expanded human wealth 70 fold in less than 2 centuries. This is more amazing when we note it occurred in the face of devastating wars and economic crisis. Opens up the field of cultural economics, which can be very useful in examining the potential and weaknesses of current policy. McCloskey examines literature, history, religion, and government institutions to trace this overlooked power of the unleashing of the economic and innovative power of the common man. once he was afforded the dignity and respect previously reserved for the ruling class. It sheds light on the current global rejection of elites who either forgot or never learned the lesson enshrined in her book. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful. compelling, informative feast By David Altschul The first book, in my 59 years as a reader, that I've found intellectually beautiful. McCloskey is lucid, clear, focused, and funny, ranging from history going back tens of thousands of years to, if you wait for it, a slur at the Cubs outfield in the book's closing pages. She persuades not only that ideas and ethics have given the world 200 years of widespread prosperity, but also that relative income (income inequality) counts for far less than how much better-off today's poor are than the poor of 60, or even 40 years ago. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Bravo! By Phil My many thanks to Ms McCloskey for this book. It reinforces my Libertarian mindset, and my distrust of left leaning intellectuals. As an unapologetic member of the Bourgeoisie, and a proud participant in the creation of things that make life better for everyone. I can't understand why anyone would want to have time stand still. What time would they choose? The Great Enrichment, based on trade tested betterment is an astonishing feat of our species. Why would anyone sneer at it? It is a shame that so many people, educated at the most prestigious institutions don't seem to get it, and that we are still faced with a predisposition, on the part of some, to repeat the mistakes of the past, such as the impoverishment of Socialism, or Fascism.

There's little doubt that most humans today are better off than their forebears. Stunningly so, the economist and historian Deirdre McCloskey argues in the concluding volume of her trilogy celebrating the oft-derided virtues of the bourgeoisie. The poorest of humanity, McCloskey shows, will soon be joining the comparative riches of Japan and Sweden and Botswana. Why? Most economists from Adam Smith and Karl Marx to Thomas Piketty say the Great Enrichment since 1800 came from accumulated capital. McCloskey disagrees, fiercely. Our riches, she argues, were made not by piling brick on brick, bank balance on bank balance, but by piling idea on idea. Capital was necessary, but so was the presence of oxygen. It was ideas, not matter, that drove trade-tested betterment. Nor were institutions the drivers. The World Bank orthodoxy of add institutions and stir doesn't work, and didn't. McCloskey builds a powerful case for the initiating role of ideas for electric motors and free elections, of course, but more deeply the bizarre and liberal ideas of equal liberty and dignity for ordinary folk. Liberalism arose from theological and political revolutions in northwest Europe, yielding a unique respect for betterment and its practitioners, and upending ancient hierarchies. Commoners were encouraged to have a go, and the bourgeoisie took up the Bourgeois Deal, and we were all enriched. Few economists or historians write like McCloskey her ability to invest the facts of economic history with the urgency of a novel, or of a leading case at law, is unmatched. She summarizes modern economics and modern economic history with verve and lucidity, yet sees through to the really big scientific conclusion. Not matter, but ideas. Big books don't come any more ambitious, or captivating, than Bourgeois Equality.

"It took me two months to read this 650-page, small-type book, the third volume in a trilogy. In that time I read several other books, absorbing Bourgeois Equality in small doses on trains, ships, Tubes, sofas and beds. If that sounds like faint praise, it's not. I wanted to savour every sentence of this remarkable feast of prose. It is a giant of a book about a giant of a topic: the great enrichment of humanity over the past 300 years. It is so rich in vocabulary, allusion and fact as to be a contender for the great book of the great book of our age. Dump your copy of Thomas Piketty and put Deirdre McCloskey on the bookshelf instead."