

explanation for the growth of inequality and the decrease in the bargaining power of labour. And welfare state researchers can find a thorough discussion of how the increase in the age dependency ratio will affect public spending, which will require policies that raise supplementary taxes to pay for these expenses. Overall, this is a timely book that effectively contributes to our deeper understanding of how global demographic processes have affected societies in the past and could do so in the future.

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Oded Galor: *The Journey of Humanity: The Origins of Wealth and Inequality*

London 2022: Penguin Books Ltd, 304 pp.

This book offers a comprehensive overview of the history of our species, describing the journey of humanity starting in Africa some 300 000 years ago. Rather than focusing on specific occurrences of historical importance, Galor pays attention to the fundamental mechanisms working since the emergence of the species, moving humankind through hundreds of thousands of

years of stagnant population size and living standards and towards the explosion of both after the industrial revolution. What Galor calls 'the cogs of change' had been turning under the surface all along but have had different consequences across the planet. The book poses the question: what has caused humanity to achieve its still-expanding growth? And further, wherein lie the roots of its immensely unequal distribution?

In the first part of the book, Galor sets his sights on explaining the mystery of growth and why humans, unlike any of our co-species on this planet, have managed to escape the Malthusian Trap. Named after Thomas Malthus, the Malthusian equilibrium captures the human tendency to utilise the affluence reached through technological advances into increase in procreation, which in turn leads to exhausted resources and again deteriorated living conditions. While this mechanism has been the rule for most of human existence, in the past two centuries it has ceased to be so. To explain the sudden and ever-accelerating growth after the extended period of stagnation, Galor considers one 'cog' at a time until he has drawn a simple yet surprisingly powerful explanation, in which human capital plays a significant role. Galor argues that it was the technology-facilitated increasing return to education that pushed parents to re-evaluate the quantity-quality trade-off of producing offspring and to choose investing into their existing children rather than bearing more. This drop in fertility and decrease in hungry mouths per household finally led to progress in human living standards in the long run. The growing human capital worked as raw material for the process of industrialisation, which in turn multiplied the demand for further human capital investments within the industrialised nations. Thus, 'the great cogs of human history' have made it possible for our species to reach for the stars.

Yet the question remains: Why has the almost miraculously expanding growth affected individuals and populations so unevenly across the world? In the second part of this book Galor re-focuses his task of explanation and puts forward a rationalisation of the mystery of inequality. Starting from the usual suspects, slavery, institutions, and cultural evolution, layer by layer causes are examined to understand present-day inequality both within and across nations. Gender inequality within a society is explored through the gender-bias built into the agricultural tools that were employed thousands of years ago. The upper body strength that was required to use the plough resulted in a persisting gender bias in how work is divided between the genders. Further, Galor points to regional differences in climate and geographical characteristics, such as soil quality and disease environment, and the effect they had on the development of regions. Where crop cultivation called for it, the tendency for future-oriented thinking flourished. Where the land was more suitable for large plantations, European settlers tended towards slavery. And so, argues Galor, the unequal spread of growth across the globe was brought about by the differences in the physical conditions faced in different parts of the world. Drawing on his own empirical work, Galor spends ample time on exploring diversity as one of the base roots of inequality. According to his thesis, as the hunter-gatherer tribes first left Africa, they formed subgroups that declined in size as the migratory distance from their original continent grew. As the decrease affected the genetic diversity of the groups, even present-day populations exhibit this pattern: The further the distance from Africa, the smaller the genetic diversity. Interestingly, Galor demonstrates a hump-shaped pattern for the distance from Africa and corresponding ones for various measures of economic prosperity, deducing an ideal level of genetic diversity for a population's

economic success. According to the author, the optimum level is one balanced on the positive and negative effects of diversity. Greater diversity maximises the possibility of innovators by comprising a larger pool of individual traits and rationales, yet it also fosters reduced social cohesion and trust, making it harder for a population to thrive and develop. While the economic prosperity of a nation can be explained by a balance in genetic diversity, argues Galor, the less-optimal composition can be mediated by policies designed to tackle the specific issues rising from the extent of genetic diversity in a nation.

Galor draws from many different fields including history, economics, and the social sciences to build a holistic picture of the world. The strategy becomes a coherent book with a wide reach of topics but somewhat limited detail and substance in its claims.

'It was [Malthus'] pessimistic predictions about the future of humanity that turned out to be utterly mistaken', writes Galor (pp. 27–28). When it comes to eluding both past and future issues facing our species, Galor seems openly optimistic in his references to the 'incredible power of human innovation' (chapter 6). He briefly explores mitigation by fertility decline and new ways of adaptation springing from further investments in human capital as positive forces that have the potential to offset climate change and allow the human species to thrive while evading the seemingly inevitable choice between seeking further economic growth and preserving our planet. Yet the issue remains: Is it possible to keep growing eternally? What, if anything, can be done to address the inevitable headaches of exponential growth? Was Malthus' pessimism warranted after all? While scientifically sound and well-argued optimism in the matter is likely welcomed by most readers, in the absence of specific policies it does appear alarming. As humans we have great potential for

overcoming issues, especially when they allow us time to adapt. However, there's no promise that any future issues will do that, and while a one-size fits all policy answer is unlikely to exist, without determined, focused, and prompt action human innovation has no chance against climate change or other future problems. Galor does offer a few general ideas for the policy implications of his work, but he does not go into much detail in offering concrete tools to counter the root-of-it-all issues he proposes. On a general level, gender equality, education, and public health are identified as routes to improved human capital, which reads as the source of much of Galor's optimism. By providing all people the living conditions, nutrition, and education needed to foster human capital, we can make use of the variety of competencies and skills that precede future progress for the human race.

Behind the ambitious goal of constructing a comprehensive framework spanning the lifetime of humanity lies an even bigger one: popularising science. The idea that this book can be a gateway opus into the scientific sphere, while possibly excessive, might not be fully misguided. The book, starting even with its structure and layer-by-layer-explanations, is generally welcoming and accessible to a wide audience. Galor largely succeeds in expressing his ideas exactly and factually while avoiding overly complicated terms, phrases, and reasoning. Where he talks in terms of scientific concepts, he deciphers them with easily understood and simplified explanations without losing too much informative power. Even though his focus remains on the big picture, throughout the book Galor offers descriptive examples, similes, metaphors, and short stories to illustrate his ideas. Whether bringing up the effect of the Black Death on population size or demonstrating the differences between periods by telling the stories of three fictional families, the author relies on mostly

well-known and approachable analogies in the hope of conveying his message to a larger audience. Fundamental theories and authors, especially in the field of economics, are introduced throughout the book, and the requirements of prior knowledge to enjoy the book are minimal. In some parts of the book, this does result in language that bears a resemblance to that of a university textbook, but the content remains beyond that.

When it comes to the factual knowledge and the arguments explored in the book, more scholarly readers might take notes to dig deeper through other venues, but they should still find the book informative. In sum, this book is likely to provide insight into how to communicate complex scientific ideas accessibly and to enable science to reach a larger audience.

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Juliana Bidadanure: *Justice Across Ages: Treating Young and Old as Equals*

Oxford 2021: Oxford University Press, 256 pp.

Intergenerational justice has become a topic of great empirical and policy concern in ageing societies [Vanhuyse 2013, 2014]. In this book, Juliana Bidadanure adds to this literature by building a theory of justice across ages by combining the ideas of complete life equality, lifespan prudence, and relational egalitarianism. The argument that inequalities between ages do not matter as long they are compatible with lifespan equality is used here as a sparring partner for a theory of justice that argues why unequal or differential treatment between ages matters and under what circumstances it is justified or even prudent. The first four chapters contain the building