

Are current US inequality levels greater or smaller than those of the EU, Russia, or China? (Surprisingly, all of them are about the same.) How much of your expectable lifetime income is determined by your birthplace? (More than 60 percent.) Whose standards of living are higher, the US's Bottom 5 percent of earners or India's Top 5 percent? (The former!)

In his 2011 book, *The Haves and the Have-Nots*, World Bank economist Branko Milanovic leverages the tools of his trade to analyze economic diversity trends, confirming some popular notions and dispelling others. Three chapters investigate different levels of inequality: among individuals within a nation, among countries (and their regions) in the world, and among the people of the world. Each chapter starts with an 'essay' that introduces relevant economic tools and then discusses the main ideas. The author commendably explains the tools in laymen's terms, making the subject easy to comprehend for the non-economist.

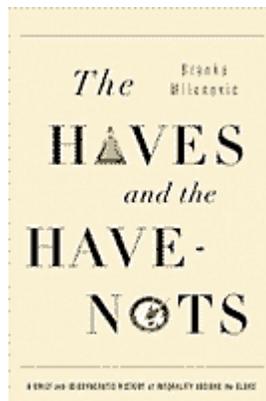
After each essay, Milanovic presents what he calls 'vignettes', short chapters aimed at illustrating and further exploring the ideas discussed in the preceding essay. Alas, a few of these discussions are borderline quirky, such

as the one on how the economic backdrop of Anna Karenina's fictional obligation-or-love dilemma would appear in the 21st century. More than once, the author drifts far off course, his passion for economic history apparently winning over his determination to paint a cohesive picture.

Given the author's affiliation, it does not come as a surprise that *The Haves and the Have-Nots* offers much more in terms of findings than conclusions. Although his sympathies shimmer through here and there, Milanovic usually restricts himself to the position of independent analyst and observer.

In spite of such limitations, thorough readers willing to think beyond the information presented will find great value in this book. They might end up drawing a number of sometimes-disturbing conclusions, though. The facts that India's economy would have to grow by 17 percent for every percent of US growth, just to keep absolute income differences between the countries from rising, or that foreign investments in India total about one-half of those in Austria, put a new perspective on the much-hyped benefits of globalization for that country. The huge and ever-growing inequality in income levels between different regions of China presents a major threat to that country's long-term stability, a realization that also poses questions about the fate of the European Union, which finds itself in a similar position.

In short, if you care about where this world is going, Milanovic offers quite a few insights that are not to be missed.



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