

Sowell, Thomas. *Wealth, poverty, and politics: an international perspective*. Basic Books, 2015. 328p index ISBN 9780465082933, \$29.99; ISBN 9780465073481 ebook, contact publisher for price.

With this volume, economist and conservative public intellectual Thomas Sowell (Stanford's Hoover Institution) joins the throngs of scholars (Thomas Piketty, Robert Putnam, Angus Deaton, Joseph Stiglitz, Anthony Atkinson) and public figures (Pope Francis, Mayor Bill de Blasio, President Obama, and candidates for the highest government offices in the US, Canada, the UK, and Continental Europe) in the debate over the extent, causes, and consequences of the twin issues of inequality and poverty and possible solutions to the situation. In the four main chapters, the author treats what he considers the four principal factors accounting for observed differences in income and wealth—specifically, geographic, cultural, societal, and political factors. In the concluding chapter and epilogue, Sowell dissects and rebuts the familiar arguments, identifying ambiguous data often trotted out and misread, frequent causality mistakes, and ideological underpinnings (such as “social justice”). Scholars will appreciate the 60 pages of endnotes and the excellent index. Lay readers will respond according to their politics: those on the Left may be infuriated or taken aback; those on the Right will likely be delighted. The world is a better place for Sowell’s having thrown down this controversial, challenging gauntlet. *Summing Up*: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.