

the meritocracy trap

the meritocracy trap is a concept that challenges the widely held belief that meritocracy—advancement based on individual ability or achievement—naturally leads to greater fairness and social mobility. In recent years, scholars, economists, and social commentators have begun to scrutinize the impact of meritocratic systems on society, questioning whether they truly deliver on their promises or, conversely, reinforce inequality and create unforeseen barriers. This article delves into the origins and definition of the meritocracy trap, explores its social and economic consequences, examines the psychological effects on individuals and families, and discusses potential solutions to mitigate its negative impacts. We will also consider how the meritocracy trap affects workplaces, education, and broader societal structures. By the end of this comprehensive analysis, readers will have a nuanced understanding of the meritocracy trap, its role in shaping modern societies, and the debates surrounding its future.

- Understanding the Meritocracy Trap: Definition and Origins
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Understanding the Meritocracy Trap: Definition and Origins

The meritocracy trap refers to the paradox in which systems designed to reward talent and effort inadvertently entrench social and economic inequality. The term originated from critiques of meritocracy—a system where advancement is supposedly based on individual merit, such as education, intelligence, and hard work. While the idea of meritocracy promises equal opportunity for all, critics argue that it often leads to a concentration of privilege and opportunity within a narrow segment of society. As families with access to resources invest heavily in their children's education and development, they create a self-perpetuating elite that is increasingly difficult for others to join. The origins of the meritocracy trap can be traced to the mid-20th century, with Michael Young's satirical book "The Rise of the Meritocracy,"

and have gained renewed attention as income inequality and social mobility have become pressing global concerns.

How the Meritocracy Trap Shapes Modern Societies

Meritocratic ideals shape the fabric of modern societies by influencing education systems, labor markets, and the distribution of social capital. Societies that prize merit tend to reward individuals who excel in standardized testing, academic achievement, and professional performance. However, the meritocracy trap emerges when these rewards become disproportionately available to those already possessing advantages, such as access to high-quality schools, extracurricular opportunities, and influential networks. As a result, the promise of equal opportunity becomes elusive, and social mobility stagnates. Instead of reducing inequality, the meritocracy trap perpetuates divisions between social classes, making it harder for individuals from less privileged backgrounds to succeed.

Economic Consequences of the Meritocracy Trap

The economic consequences of the meritocracy trap are far-reaching, affecting both individuals and entire economies. When access to elite education and lucrative careers is dominated by a select group, the labor market becomes less dynamic and innovative. This concentration of opportunity can lead to wage stagnation for the majority and rising incomes for the top tier, exacerbating wealth inequality. Moreover, the emphasis on credentials and educational attainment can discourage entrepreneurship and alternative career paths. The meritocracy trap also contributes to a growing skills gap, as those outside the elite struggle to access quality education and training. Over time, these economic disparities can undermine social cohesion and limit overall economic growth.

Key Economic Impacts of the Meritocracy Trap

- Rising income inequality between top earners and the rest of the population
- Reduced social mobility and entrenched class divisions
- Skills gaps and underutilization of talent
- Barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation
- Higher financial stress on middle and lower-income families

Social and Psychological Impacts

The social and psychological impacts of the meritocracy trap extend beyond economic outcomes. Individuals navigating meritocratic systems often face intense pressure to perform and achieve, leading to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout. For those unable to access elite opportunities, feelings of inadequacy and exclusion can erode self-esteem and social trust. In families, the pursuit of meritocratic success may lead to over-scheduling, diminished family time, and strained relationships. Furthermore, the belief that success is entirely self-made can foster judgment and stigmatization of those who struggle, deepening social divisions and reducing empathy.

Common Social and Psychological Effects

- Increased anxiety and mental health challenges among students and professionals
- Social isolation and reduced sense of community
- Intense parental pressure and competition among children
- Stigmatization of those perceived as "non-meritorious"
- Feelings of failure despite effort and hard work

The Meritocracy Trap in Education and Workplaces

Education and workplaces are at the heart of the meritocracy trap, as they often serve as the primary arenas for assessing and rewarding merit. In education, access to prestigious schools and universities increasingly depends on resources such as tutoring, test preparation, and legacy admissions. These advantages amplify the gap between students from affluent backgrounds and those from underprivileged communities. In the workplace, hiring and promotion decisions may favor candidates with elite credentials, further perpetuating inequality. The meritocracy trap thus creates cycles where privilege is reproduced, making upward mobility more challenging for those outside established networks.

Manifestations of the Meritocracy Trap in Education

- Admissions processes favoring legacy students and those with access to test prep
- Disproportionate funding for elite schools and universities
- Emphasis on standardized testing over holistic assessment
- Limited pathways for vocational and alternative education

Workplace Dynamics and the Meritocracy Trap

- Preference for candidates from top-tier institutions
- Lack of diversity in leadership and decision-making roles
- Overemphasis on credentials and experience over skills and potential
- Limited upward mobility for employees without elite backgrounds

Criticisms and Debates Around Meritocracy

The meritocracy trap has sparked significant debate among academics, policymakers, and the public. Critics argue that meritocracy, as currently practiced, fails to deliver on its foundational promise of equal opportunity and instead reinforces existing social hierarchies. Some point to the psychological toll and societal divisions created by relentless competition. Others highlight the limitations of standardized measurements of merit, which may not capture diverse talents and contributions. Proponents, on the other hand, contend that meritocracy is still preferable to systems based on nepotism or inherited privilege, and advocate for reforms rather than wholesale rejection. The debate continues over how to balance the ideals of fairness and opportunity with the realities of unequal starting points.

Strategies to Overcome the Meritocracy Trap

Addressing the meritocracy trap requires a multifaceted approach that tackles structural inequalities and

reimagines the way merit is defined and rewarded. Policymakers and institutions can implement reforms to broaden access to quality education, support diverse pathways to success, and promote inclusive hiring and promotion practices. Efforts to reduce the emphasis on standardized testing and expand support for vocational, technical, and creative careers can help level the playing field. Additionally, fostering a culture that values collaboration, empathy, and holistic development can mitigate some of the social and psychological harms associated with the meritocracy trap.

Effective Strategies to Address the Meritocracy Trap

- Investing in early childhood education and equalizing school funding
- Expanding access to higher education and reducing financial barriers
- Promoting holistic admissions and hiring processes
- Supporting alternative career pathways and lifelong learning
- Encouraging diversity and inclusion in leadership roles
- Raising public awareness about the limitations of meritocracy

Q&A: Trending Questions and Answers About the Meritocracy Trap

Q: What is the meritocracy trap?

A: The meritocracy trap describes a situation where systems designed to reward individual talent and effort actually end up reinforcing social and economic inequality, making it harder for people from less privileged backgrounds to advance.

Q: How does the meritocracy trap affect social mobility?

A: The meritocracy trap limits social mobility by concentrating opportunities and resources among those who already have advantages, making upward movement more difficult for others.

Q: What are some examples of the meritocracy trap in education?

A: Examples include admissions practices that favor legacy students, access to extensive test preparation resources, and unequal school funding that benefits affluent communities.

Q: Why is the meritocracy trap considered problematic?

A: It is considered problematic because it undermines the ideal of equal opportunity, exacerbates inequality, and can have negative psychological and societal impacts.

Q: Can meritocracy ever be truly fair?

A: While the idea of meritocracy aims for fairness, structural inequalities in access to education and resources often prevent it from being fully equitable in practice.

Q: How can workplaces avoid falling into the meritocracy trap?

A: Workplaces can adopt inclusive hiring and promotion practices, value diverse experiences and skills, and reduce overreliance on elite credentials.

Q: What are the psychological effects of the meritocracy trap on individuals?

A: Individuals may experience stress, anxiety, burnout, and feelings of inadequacy, especially when they are unable to meet high meritocratic standards.

Q: What reforms can help address the meritocracy trap in education?

A: Reforms may include equalizing school funding, broadening admissions criteria, and supporting vocational and alternative education pathways.

Q: Who first coined the term “meritocracy trap”?

A: The concept builds on Michael Young’s critique of meritocracy, but the term "meritocracy trap" was popularized in recent years by scholars analyzing rising inequality.

Q: What is the future outlook for meritocracy in society?

A: The future of meritocracy depends on how societies address its inherent inequalities; ongoing reforms and debates aim to create more inclusive and equitable systems.

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The Meritocracy Trap: Why Hard Work Isn't Always Enough

The American Dream, the bootstrapping myth, the idea that hard work guarantees success – these are powerful narratives woven into the fabric of our society. But what happens when the system designed to reward merit actually reinforces inequality? This is the core of "The Meritocracy Trap," a concept that challenges our fundamental assumptions about fairness and opportunity. This post will delve deep into this complex issue, exploring its mechanisms, consequences, and potential solutions. We'll examine how the very systems intended to promote equality can inadvertently create and perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage, leaving many feeling trapped despite their efforts.

Understanding the Meritocracy Trap: A System of its Own Making

The term "meritocracy trap," coined by Michael Sandel, describes a system where individuals are rewarded based on their perceived merit. This sounds fair, right? The problem arises when the criteria for determining "merit" are inherently biased.

H3: The Illusion of Equal Opportunity

The meritocratic ideal presupposes a level playing field. Everyone starts at the same point, and success is solely determined by individual effort and talent. However, this is far from reality. Factors such as socioeconomic background, access to quality education, and inherited wealth significantly

influence an individual's opportunities, creating a system where those already privileged are better positioned to succeed, regardless of their relative merit compared to their less privileged counterparts.

H3: The High Cost of Success

Meritocratic systems often incentivize relentless competition. Individuals are pressured to constantly strive for more, accumulating credentials, chasing promotions, and sacrificing personal well-being in pursuit of success. This relentless pressure can lead to burnout, anxiety, and a sense of inadequacy, particularly for those who, despite their best efforts, fall short of achieving their goals. The system prioritizes outcomes over process, leaving many feeling like failures even when they have worked tirelessly.

The Perpetuation of Inequality: How the Trap Closes

The meritocracy trap isn't merely a temporary setback; it's a self-perpetuating cycle. Those who succeed often benefit from a network of contacts, resources, and social capital that are largely inaccessible to those starting from a disadvantaged position. This creates a feedback loop where privilege begets privilege.

H3: Inheritance and the Uneven Playing Field

Wealth is often passed down through generations, providing children of affluent families with significant advantages. They have access to better schools, tutors, and opportunities that allow them to build upon their inherited privilege. This isn't necessarily a matter of laziness or lack of talent but rather a reflection of the systemic inequalities embedded within the meritocratic framework.

H3: The Credentialization Race

The emphasis on credentials – degrees, certifications, awards – further exacerbates the problem. While credentials can be indicators of competence, the pursuit of them often becomes an end in itself, driving up costs and creating barriers to entry for those without the resources to acquire them. This creates a system where individuals are judged not on their actual abilities but on their ability to accumulate credentials, further benefiting the already privileged.

Escaping the Trap: Towards a More Equitable Future

The meritocracy trap isn't insurmountable. Addressing this issue requires a multi-pronged approach focused on leveling the playing field and challenging the underlying assumptions that drive inequality.

H3: Investing in Early Childhood Education

Providing high-quality early childhood education for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, is crucial. This lays the foundation for future success, mitigating the impact of early disadvantages.

H3: Promoting Equitable Access to Higher Education

Making higher education more affordable and accessible, through measures such as increased financial aid and scholarships, is vital. This ensures that talent and ambition are not stifled by financial constraints.

H3: Rethinking Success Metrics

We need to move beyond a solely outcome-based definition of success. Valuing effort, resilience, and personal well-being alongside achievement can help reduce the pressure-cooker environment that fuels the meritocracy trap.

Conclusion: Redefining Merit and Rebuilding Opportunity

The meritocracy trap is a complex issue with no easy solutions. It requires a fundamental shift in how we view success, opportunity, and the role of social systems in shaping individual outcomes. By acknowledging the inherent biases within meritocratic systems and actively working to address them, we can build a more just and equitable society where hard work truly translates into opportunity for all.

FAQs:

Q1: Is meritocracy completely flawed? A1: No, meritocracy has the potential to be a fair system. The problem lies in its imperfect implementation, where systemic inequalities skew the playing field, rendering the system unfair in practice.

Q2: How can I personally avoid falling into the meritocracy trap? A2: Focus on developing skills and knowledge that are valuable, prioritize your well-being, and advocate for policy changes that promote greater equality.

Q3: What role does social mobility play in the meritocracy trap? A3: Low social mobility is a key indicator of the meritocracy trap. It demonstrates that individuals are often constrained by their starting point, regardless of their efforts.

Q4: Are there any successful examples of mitigating the meritocracy trap? A4: Some Scandinavian countries have implemented policies that promote greater social mobility and reduce inequality, providing examples of what's possible.

Q5: What's the difference between meritocracy and equality of opportunity? A5: Meritocracy aims to reward merit, but often fails to address unequal starting points. Equality of opportunity seeks to create a level playing field before merit is assessed.

the meritocracy trap: *The Meritocracy Trap* Daniel Markovits, 2020 Even in the midst of runaway economic inequality and dangerous social division, it remains an axiom of modern life that meritocracy reigns supreme and promises to open opportunity to all. The idea that reward should follow ability and effort is so entrenched in our psyche that, even as society divides itself at almost every turn, all sides can be heard repeating meritocratic notions. Meritocracy cuts to the heart of who we think we are. But what if, both up and down the social ladder, meritocracy is a sham? Today, meritocracy has become exactly what it was conceived to resist- a mechanism for the concentration and dynastic transmission of wealth and privilege across generations. Upward mobility has become a fantasy, and the embattled middle classes are now more likely to sink into the working poor than to rise into the professional elite. At the same time, meritocracy now ensnares even those who manage to claw their way to the top, requiring rich adults to work with crushing intensity, exploiting their expensive educations in order to extract a return. All this is not the result of deviations or retreats from meritocracy but rather stems directly from meritocracy's successes. This is the radical argument that *The Meritocracy Trap* prosecutes with rare force, comprehensive research, and devastating persuasion.

the meritocracy trap: *The Meritocracy Trap* Daniel Markovits, 2020-09-08 A revolutionary new argument from eminent Yale Law professor Daniel Markovits attacking the false promise of meritocracy It is an axiom of American life that advantage should be earned through ability and effort. Even as the country divides itself at every turn, the meritocratic ideal – that social and economic rewards should follow achievement rather than breeding – reigns supreme. Both Democrats and Republicans insistently repeat meritocratic notions. Meritocracy cuts to the heart of who we are. It sustains the American dream. But what if, both up and down the social ladder, meritocracy is a sham? Today, meritocracy has become exactly what it was conceived to resist: a mechanism for the concentration and dynastic transmission of wealth and privilege across generations. Upward mobility has become a fantasy, and the embattled middle classes are now more likely to sink into the working poor than to rise into the professional elite. At the same time,

meritocracy now ensnares even those who manage to claw their way to the top, requiring rich adults to work with crushing intensity, exploiting their expensive educations in order to extract a return. All this is not the result of deviations or retreats from meritocracy but rather stems directly from meritocracy's successes. This is the radical argument that Daniel Markovits prosecutes with rare force. Markovits is well placed to expose the sham of meritocracy. Having spent his life at elite universities, he knows from the inside the corrosive system we are trapped within. Markovits also knows that, if we understand that meritocratic inequality produces near-universal harm, we can cure it. When The Meritocracy Trap reveals the inner workings of the meritocratic machine, it also illuminates the first steps outward, towards a new world that might once again afford dignity and prosperity to the American people.

the meritocracy trap: The Meritocracy Trap Daniel Markovits, 2019-09-10 A revolutionary new argument from eminent Yale Law professor Daniel Markovits attacking the false promise of meritocracy It is an axiom of American life that advantage should be earned through ability and effort. Even as the country divides itself at every turn, the meritocratic ideal – that social and economic rewards should follow achievement rather than breeding – reigns supreme. Both Democrats and Republicans insistently repeat meritocratic notions. Meritocracy cuts to the heart of who we are. It sustains the American dream. But what if, both up and down the social ladder, meritocracy is a sham? Today, meritocracy has become exactly what it was conceived to resist: a mechanism for the concentration and dynastic transmission of wealth and privilege across generations. Upward mobility has become a fantasy, and the embattled middle classes are now more likely to sink into the working poor than to rise into the professional elite. At the same time, meritocracy now ensnares even those who manage to claw their way to the top, requiring rich adults to work with crushing intensity, exploiting their expensive educations in order to extract a return. All this is not the result of deviations or retreats from meritocracy but rather stems directly from meritocracy's successes. This is the radical argument that Daniel Markovits prosecutes with rare force. Markovits is well placed to expose the sham of meritocracy. Having spent his life at elite universities, he knows from the inside the corrosive system we are trapped within. Markovits also knows that, if we understand that meritocratic inequality produces near-universal harm, we can cure it. When The Meritocracy Trap reveals the inner workings of the meritocratic machine, it also illuminates the first steps outward, towards a new world that might once again afford dignity and prosperity to the American people.

the meritocracy trap: The Power Law Sebastian Mallaby, 2022-01-25 From an award-winning financial historian comes the gripping, character-driven story of venture capital and the world it made Innovations rarely come from experts. Jeff Bezos was not a bookseller; Elon Musk was not in the auto industry. When it comes to innovation, a legendary venture capitalist told Sebastian Mallaby, the future cannot be predicted, it can only be discovered. Most attempts at discovery fail, but a few succeed at such a scale that they more than make up for everything else. That extreme ratio of success and failure is the power law that drives venture capital, Silicon Valley, the tech sector, and, by extension, the world. Drawing on unprecedented access to the most celebrated venture capitalists of all time, award-winning financial historian Sebastian Mallaby tells the story of this strange tribe of financiers who have funded the world's most successful companies, from Google to SpaceX to Alibaba. With a riveting blend of storytelling and analysis, The Power Law makes sense of the seeming randomness of success in venture capital, an industry that relies, for good and ill, on gut instinct and personality rather than spreadsheets and data. We learn the unvarnished truth about some of the most iconic triumphs and infamous disasters in the history of tech, from the comedy of errors that was the birth of Apple to the venture funding that fostered hubris at WeWork and Uber to the industry's notorious lack of women and ethnic minorities. Now the power law echoes around the world: it has transformed China's digital economy beyond recognition, and London is one of the top cities for venture capital investment. By taking us so deeply into the VCs' game, The Power Law helps us think about our own future through their eyes.

the meritocracy trap: Plutocrats Chrystia Freeland, 2012-10-25 Forget the 1% - it's time to

get to grips with the 0.1% ... There has always been some gap between rich and poor, but it has never been wider - and now the rich are getting wealthier at such breakneck speed that the middle classes are being squeezed out. While the wealthiest 10% of Americans, for example, receive half the nation's income, the real money flows even higher up, in the top 0.1%. As a transglobal class of highly successful professionals, these self-made oligarchs often have more in common with one another than with their own countrymen. But how is this happening, and who are the people making it happen? Chrystia Freeland, acclaimed business journalist and Global Editor-at-Large of Reuters, has unprecedented access to the richest and most successful people on the planet, from Davos to Dubai, and dissects their lives with intelligence, empathy and objectivity. Pacily written and powerfully researched, *Plutocrats* could not provide a more timely insight into the current state of Capitalism and its most wealthy players. 'A superb piece of reportage ... a tremendous illumination' (New Statesman on Freeland's previous title, *Sale of the Century*)

the meritocracy trap: *The Years That Matter Most* Paul Tough, 2019-09-12 What has gone wrong in our universities? And how do we make it right? When Amy applied to university, she thought she'd be judged purely on her merits. But she never thought that her family background would have as much impact on her future as her grades. When KiKi arrived at university, she knew she could be the only black woman in her class. But she didn't know how out of place she would feel, nor how unwelcoming her peers would be. When Orry graduated from university, he was told he'd probably land a six-figure salary. But he wasn't told he'd end up barely scraping a living wage, struggling to feed his children. Drawing on the stories of hundreds of American students, *The Years That Matters Most* is a revelatory account of a university system in crisis. Paul Tough, bestselling author of *How Children Succeed*, exposes a world where small-town colleges go bust, while the most prestigious raise billions every year; where overstretched admissions officers are forced to pick rich candidates over smart ones; where black and working-class students are left to sink or swim on uncaring campuses. Along the way, he uncovers cutting-edge research from the academics leading the way to a new kind of university - one where students succeed not because of their background, but because of the quality of their minds. The result is a call-to-arms for universities that work for everyone, and a manual for how we can make it happen.

the meritocracy trap: *The Aristocracy of Talent* Adrian Wooldridge, 2023-02-21 The Times (UK) book of the year! Meritocracy: the idea that people should be advanced according to their talents rather than their birth. While this initially seemed like a novel concept, by the end of the twentieth century it had become the world's ruling ideology. How did this happen, and why is meritocracy now under attack from both right and left? In *The Aristocracy of Talent*, esteemed journalist and historian Adrian Wooldridge traces the history of meritocracy forged by the politicians and officials who introduced the revolutionary principle of open competition, the psychologists who devised methods for measuring natural mental abilities, and the educationalists who built ladders of educational opportunity. He looks outside western cultures and shows what transformative effects it has had everywhere it has been adopted, especially once women were brought into the meritocratic system. Wooldridge also shows how meritocracy has now become corrupted and argues that the recent stalling of social mobility is the result of failure to complete the meritocratic revolution. Rather than abandoning meritocracy, he says, we should call for its renewal.

the meritocracy trap: *Against Meritocracy* Jo Littler, 2017-08-16 Meritocracy today involves the idea that whatever your social position at birth, society ought to offer enough opportunity and mobility for 'talent' to combine with 'effort' in order to 'rise to the top'. This idea is one of the most prevalent social and cultural tropes of our time, as palpable in the speeches of politicians as in popular culture. In this book Jo Littler argues that meritocracy is the key cultural means of legitimisation for contemporary neoliberal culture - and that whilst it promises opportunity, it in fact creates new forms of social division. *Against Meritocracy* is split into two parts. Part I explores the genealogies of meritocracy within social theory, political discourse and working cultures. It traces the dramatic U-turn in meritocracy's meaning, from socialist slur to a contemporary ideal of how a society should be organised. Part II uses a series of case studies to analyse the cultural pull of

popular 'parables of progress', from reality TV to the super-rich and celebrity CEOs, from social media controversies to the rise of the 'mumpreneur'. Paying special attention to the role of gender, 'race' and class, this book provides new conceptualisations of the meaning of meritocracy in contemporary culture and society.

the meritocracy trap: The Tyranny of Merit Michael J. Sandel, 2020-09-10 A TLS, GUARDIAN AND NEW STATESMAN BOOK OF THE YEAR 2020 The new bestseller from the acclaimed author of *Justice* and one of the world's most popular philosophers Astute, insightful, and empathetic...A crucial book for this moment Tara Westover, author of *Educated* These are dangerous times for democracy. We live in an age of winners and losers, where the odds are stacked in favour of the already fortunate. Stalled social mobility and entrenched inequality give the lie to the promise that you can make it if you try. And the consequence is a brew of anger and frustration that has fuelled populist protest, with the triumph of Brexit and election of Donald Trump. Michael J. Sandel argues that to overcome the polarized politics of our time, we must rethink the attitudes toward success and failure that have accompanied globalisation and rising inequality. Sandel highlights the hubris a meritocracy generates among the winners and the harsh judgement it imposes on those left behind. He offers an alternative way of thinking about success - more attentive to the role of luck in human affairs, more conducive to an ethic of humility, and more hospitable to a politics of the common good.

the meritocracy trap: The Myth of Meritocracy James Bloodworth, 2016-05-19 The best jobs in Britain today are overwhelmingly done by the children of the wealthy. Meanwhile, it is increasingly difficult for bright but poor kids to transcend their circumstances. This state of affairs should not only worry the less well-off. It hurts the middle classes too, who are increasingly locked out of the top professions by those from affluent backgrounds. Hitherto, Labour and Conservative politicians alike have sought to deal with the problem by promoting the idea of 'equality of opportunity'. In politics, social mobility is the only game in town, and old socialist arguments emphasising economic equality are about as fashionable today as mullets and shell suits. Yet genuine equality of opportunity is impossible alongside levels of inequality last seen during the 1930s. In a grossly unequal society, the privileges of the parents unfailingly become the privileges of the children. A vague commitment from our politicians to build a 'meritocracy' is not enough. Nor is it desirable: a perfectly stratified meritocracy, in which everyone knew their station based on 'merit', would be a deeply unpleasant place to live. Any genuine attempt to improve social mobility must start by reducing the gap between rich and poor. PROVOCATIONS is a groundbreaking new series of short polemics composed by some of the most intriguing voices in contemporary culture and edited by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown. Sharp, intelligent and controversial, *Provocations* provides insightful contributions to the most vital discussions in society today.

the meritocracy trap: GO BIG Ed Miliband, 2021-06-03 How do we rein in the power of Big Tech? How do we tackle the climate crisis? How can all of us play a part in making change happen? For the past four years, Ed Miliband has been discovering and interviewing brilliant people all around the world who are successfully tackling the biggest problems we face, transforming communities and pioneering global movements. *Go Big* draws on the most imaginative and ambitious of these ideas to provide a vision for the kind of society we need. A better world is possible; the solutions are out there. We can all make a difference. We just need to know where to look - and have the courage to think big. *Go Big* shows us how. 'Enthralling' PHILIP PULLMAN 'Such a hopeful book' ELIZABETH DAY 'Should be the rallying cry of progressives around the world' RUTGER BREGMAN

the meritocracy trap: When I Dare to Be Powerful Audre Lorde, 2020-09-24 'Women so empowered are dangerous' Written with a 'black woman's anger' and the precision of a poet, these searing pieces by the groundbreaking writer Audre Lorde are a celebration of female strength and solidarity, and a cry to speak out against those who seek to silence anyone they see as 'other'. One of twenty new books in the bestselling Penguin Great Ideas series. This new selection showcases a diverse list of thinkers who have helped shape our world today, from anarchists to stoics, feminists to prophets, satirists to Zen Buddhists.

the meritocracy trap: Success and Luck Robert H. Frank, 2017-09-26 From New York Times bestselling author and economics columnist Robert Frank, a compelling book that explains why the rich underestimate the importance of luck in their success, why that hurts everyone, and what we can do about it How important is luck in economic success? No question more reliably divides conservatives from liberals. As conservatives correctly observe, people who amass great fortunes are almost always talented and hardworking. But liberals are also correct to note that countless others have those same qualities yet never earn much. In recent years, social scientists have discovered that chance plays a much larger role in important life outcomes than most people imagine. In *Success and Luck*, bestselling author and New York Times economics columnist Robert Frank explores the surprising implications of those findings to show why the rich underestimate the importance of luck in success—and why that hurts everyone, even the wealthy. Frank describes how, in a world increasingly dominated by winner-take-all markets, chance opportunities and trivial initial advantages often translate into much larger ones—and enormous income differences—over time; how false beliefs about luck persist, despite compelling evidence against them; and how myths about personal success and luck shape individual and political choices in harmful ways. But, Frank argues, we could decrease the inequality driven by sheer luck by adopting simple, unintrusive policies that would free up trillions of dollars each year—more than enough to fix our crumbling infrastructure, expand healthcare coverage, fight global warming, and reduce poverty, all without requiring painful sacrifices from anyone. If this sounds implausible, you'll be surprised to discover that the solution requires only a few, noncontroversial steps. Compellingly readable, *Success and Luck* shows how a more accurate understanding of the role of chance in life could lead to better, richer, and fairer economies and societies.

the meritocracy trap: A Modern Legal Ethics Daniel Markovits, 2010-12-28 *A Modern Legal Ethics* proposes a wholesale renovation of legal ethics, one that contributes to ethical thought generally. Daniel Markovits reinterprets the positive law governing lawyers to identify fidelity as its organizing ideal. Unlike ordinary loyalty, fidelity requires lawyers to repress their personal judgments concerning the truth and justice of their clients' claims. Next, the book asks what it is like—not psychologically but ethically—to practice law subject to the self-effacement that fidelity demands. Fidelity requires lawyers to lie and to cheat on behalf of their clients. However, an ethically profound interest in integrity gives lawyers reason to resist this characterization of their conduct. Any legal ethics adequate to the complexity of lawyers' lived experience must address the moral dilemmas immanent in this tension. The dominant approaches to legal ethics cannot. Finally, *A Modern Legal Ethics* reintegrates legal ethics into political philosophy in a fashion commensurate to lawyers' central place in political practice. Lawyerly fidelity supports the authority of adjudication and thus the broader project of political legitimacy. Throughout, the book rejects the casuistry that dominates contemporary applied ethics in favor of an interpretive method that may be mimicked in other areas. Moreover, because lawyers practice at the hinge of modern morals and politics, the book's interpretive insights identify—in an unusually pure and intense form—the moral and political conditions of all modernity.

the meritocracy trap: The Gig Academy Adrianna Kezar, Tom DePaola, Daniel T. Scott, 2019-10-29 Why the Gig Academy is the dominant organizational form within the higher education economy—and its troubling implications for faculty, students, and the future of college education. Over the past two decades, higher education employment has undergone a radical transformation with faculty becoming contingent, staff being outsourced, and postdocs and graduate students becoming a larger share of the workforce. For example, the faculty has shifted from one composed mostly of tenure-track, full-time employees to one made up of contingent, part-time teachers. Non-tenure-track instructors now make up 70 percent of college faculty. Their pay for teaching eight courses averages \$22,400 a year—less than the annual salary of most fast-food workers. In *The Gig Academy*, Adrianna Kezar, Tom DePaola, and Daniel T. Scott assess the impact of this disturbing workforce development. Providing an overarching framework that takes the concept of the gig economy and applies it to the university workforce, this book scrutinizes labor restructuring across

both academic and nonacademic spheres. By synthesizing these employment trends, the book reveals the magnitude of the problem for individual workers across all institutional types and job categories while illustrating the damaging effects of these changes on student outcomes, campus community, and institutional effectiveness. A pointed critique of contemporary neoliberalism, the book also includes an analysis of the growing divide between employees and administrators. The authors conclude by examining the strengthening state of unionization among university workers. Advocating a collectivist, action-oriented vision for reversing the tide of exploitation, Kezar, DePaola, and Scott urge readers to use the book as a tool to interrogate the state of working relations on their own campuses and fight for a system that is run democratically for the benefit of all. Ultimately, *The Gig Academy* is a call to arms, one that encourages non-tenure-track faculty, staff, postdocs, graduate students, and administrative and tenure-track allies to unite in a common struggle against the neoliberal Gig Academy.

the meritocracy trap: *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy* Lani Guinier, 2016-01-12 A fresh and bold argument for revamping our standards of “merit” and a clear blueprint for creating collaborative education models that strengthen our democracy rather than privileging individual elites Standing on the foundations of America’s promise of equal opportunity, our universities purport to serve as engines of social mobility and practitioners of democracy. But as acclaimed scholar and pioneering civil rights advocate Lani Guinier argues, the merit systems that dictate the admissions practices of these institutions are functioning to select and privilege elite individuals rather than create learning communities geared to advance democratic societies. Having studied and taught at schools such as Harvard University, Yale Law School, and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Guinier has spent years examining the experiences of ethnic minorities and of women at the nation’s top institutions of higher education, and here she lays bare the practices that impede the stated missions of these schools. Goaded on by a contemporary culture that establishes value through ranking and sorting, universities assess applicants using the vocabulary of private, highly individualized merit. As a result of private merit standards and ever-increasing tuitions, our colleges and universities increasingly are failing in their mission to provide educational opportunity and to prepare students for productive and engaged citizenship. To reclaim higher education as a cornerstone of democracy, Guinier argues that institutions of higher learning must focus on admitting and educating a class of students who will be critical thinkers, active citizens, and publicly spirited leaders. Guinier presents a plan for considering “democratic merit,” a system that measures the success of higher education not by the personal qualities of the students who enter but by the work and service performed by the graduates who leave. Guinier goes on to offer vivid examples of communities that have developed effective learning strategies based not on an individual’s “merit” but on the collaborative strength of a group, learning and working together, supporting members, and evolving into powerful collectives. Examples are taken from across the country and include a wide range of approaches, each innovative and effective. Guinier argues for reformation, not only of the very premises of admissions practices but of the shape of higher education itself.

the meritocracy trap: Relational Inequalities Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, Dustin Robert Avent-Holt, 2019 Organizations are the dominant social invention for generating resources and distributing them. *Relational Inequalities* develops a general sociological and organizational analysis of inequality, exploring the processes that generate inequalities in access to respect, resources, and rewards. Framing their analysis through a relational account of social and economic life, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey and Dustin Avent-Holt explain how resources are generated and distributed both within and between organizations. They show that inequalities are produced through generic processes that occur in all social relationships: categorization and their resulting status hierarchies, organizational resource pooling, exploitation, social closure, and claims-making. Drawing on a wide range of case studies, Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt focus on the workplace as the primary organization for generating inequality and provide a series of global goals to advance both a comparative organizational research model and to challenge troubling inequalities.

the meritocracy trap: The Education Trap Cristina Viviana Groeger, 2021-03-09

Why—contrary to much expert and popular opinion—more education may not be the answer to skyrocketing inequality. For generations, Americans have looked to education as the solution to economic disadvantage. Yet, although more people are earning degrees, the gap between rich and poor is widening. Cristina Groeger delves into the history of this seeming contradiction, explaining how education came to be seen as a panacea even as it paved the way for deepening inequality. The Education Trap returns to the first decades of the twentieth century, when Americans were grappling with the unprecedented inequities of the Gilded Age. Groeger's test case is the city of Boston, which spent heavily on public schools. She examines how workplaces came to depend on an army of white-collar staff, largely women and second-generation immigrants, trained in secondary schools. But Groeger finds that the shift to more educated labor had negative consequences—both intended and unintended—for many workers. Employers supported training in schools in order to undermine the influence of craft unions, and so shift workplace power toward management. And advanced educational credentials became a means of controlling access to high-paying professional and business jobs, concentrating power and wealth. Formal education thus became a central force in maintaining inequality. The idea that more education should be the primary means of reducing inequality may be appealing to politicians and voters, but Groeger warns that it may be a dangerous policy trap. If we want a more equitable society, we should not just prescribe more time in the classroom, but fight for justice in the workplace.

the meritocracy trap: The Great Divide Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2016 Why has inequality increased in the Western world - and what can we do about it? In *The Great Divide*, Joseph E. Stiglitz expands on the diagnosis he offered in his best-selling book *The Price of Inequality* and suggests ways to counter this growing problem. With his characteristic blend of clarity and passion, Stiglitz argues that inequality is a choice - the cumulative result of unjust policies and misguided priorities. In these essays, articles and reflections, Stiglitz fully exposes the inequality - from its dimensions and its causes to its consequences for the world - that is afflicting America and other Western countries in thrall to neoliberalism. From Reagan-era policies to the Great Recession and its long aftermath, Stiglitz delves into the processes and irresponsible policies - deregulation, tax cuts for the rich, the corruption of the political process - that are leaving many people further and further behind and turning the dream of a socially mobile society into an ever more unachievable myth. With formidable yet accessible economic insight, he urges us to embrace real solutions: increasing taxes on corporations and the wealthy; investing in education, science, and infrastructure; helping homeowners instead of banks; and, most importantly, doing more to restore the economy to full employment. Stiglitz's analysis reaches beyond America - the inequality leader of the developed world - to draw lessons from Scandinavia, Singapore, and Japan, and he argues against the tide of unnecessary, destructive austerity that is sweeping across Europe. Ultimately, Stiglitz believes our choice is not between growth and fairness; with the right policies, we can choose both.

the meritocracy trap: Blueprint, with a new afterword Robert Plomin, 2019-07-02 A top behavioral geneticist makes the case that DNA inherited from our parents at the moment of conception can predict our psychological strengths and weaknesses. In *Blueprint*, behavioral geneticist Robert Plomin describes how the DNA revolution has made DNA personal by giving us the power to predict our psychological strengths and weaknesses from birth. A century of genetic research shows that DNA differences inherited from our parents are the consistent lifelong sources of our psychological individuality—the blueprint that makes us who we are. Plomin reports that genetics explains more about the psychological differences among people than all other factors combined. Nature, not nurture, is what makes us who we are. Plomin explores the implications of these findings, drawing some provocative conclusions—among them that parenting styles don't really affect children's outcomes once genetics is taken into effect. This book offers readers a unique insider's view of the exciting synergies that came from combining genetics and psychology. The paperback edition has a new afterword by the author.

the meritocracy trap: The New Class War Michael Lind, 2020-02-20 An Evening Standard's

Book of the Year 'A tour de force.' David Goodhart All over the West, party systems have shattered and governments have been thrown into turmoil. The embattled establishment claims that these populist insurgencies seek to overthrow liberal democracy. The truth is no less alarming but is more complex: Western democracies are being torn apart by a new class war. In this controversial and groundbreaking analysis, Michael Lind, one of America's leading thinkers, debunks the idea that the insurgencies are primarily the result of bigotry and reveals the real battle lines. He traces how the breakdown of class compromises has left large populations in Western democracies politically adrift. We live in a globalized world that benefits elites in high income 'hubs' while suppressing the economic and social interests of those in more traditional lower-wage 'heartlands'. A bold framework for understanding the world, *The New Class War* argues that only a fresh class settlement can avert a never-ending cycle of clashes between oligarchs and populists - and save democracy.

the meritocracy trap: The Code of Capital Katharina Pistor, 2020-11-03 Capital is the defining feature of modern economies, yet most people have no idea where it actually comes from. What is it, exactly, that transforms mere wealth into an asset that automatically creates more wealth? The Code of Capital explains how capital is created behind closed doors in the offices of private attorneys, and why this little-known fact is one of the biggest reasons for the widening wealth gap between the holders of capital and everybody else. In this revealing book, Katharina Pistor argues that the law selectively codes certain assets, endowing them with the capacity to protect and produce private wealth. With the right legal coding, any object, claim, or idea can be turned into capital - and lawyers are the keepers of the code. Pistor describes how they pick and choose among different legal systems and legal devices for the ones that best serve their clients' needs, and how techniques that were first perfected centuries ago to code landholdings as capital are being used today to code stocks, bonds, ideas, and even expectations--assets that exist only in law. A powerful new way of thinking about one of the most pernicious problems of our time, *The Code of Capital* explores the different ways that debt, complex financial products, and other assets are coded to give financial advantage to their holders. This provocative book paints a troubling portrait of the pervasive global nature of the code, the people who shape it, and the governments that enforce it.--Provided by publisher.

the meritocracy trap: Virtue Hoarders Catherine Liu, 2021-01-26 A denunciation of the credentialed elite class that serves capitalism while insisting on its own progressive heroism Professional Managerial Class (PMC) elite workers labor in a world of performative identity and virtue signaling, publicizing an ability to do ordinary things in fundamentally superior ways. Author Catherine Liu shows how the PMC stands in the way of social justice and economic redistribution by promoting meritocracy, philanthropy, and other self-serving operations to abet an individualist path to a better world. *Virtue Hoarders* is an unapologetically polemical call to reject making a virtue out of taste and consumption habits. Forerunners: Ideas First is a thought-in-process series of breakthrough digital publications. Written between fresh ideas and finished books, *Forerunners* draws on scholarly work initiated in notable blogs, social media, conference plenaries, journal articles, and the synergy of academic exchange. This is gray literature publishing: where intense thinking, change, and speculation take place in scholarship.

the meritocracy trap: The Second Mountain David Brooks, 2019-04-16 NO.1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE SOCIAL ANIMAL Are you on your first or second mountain? Is life about you - or others? About success - or something deeper? The world tells us that we should pursue our self-interest: career wins, high status, nice things. These are the goals of our first mountain. But at some point in our lives we might find that we're not interested in what other people tell us to want. We want the things that are truly worth wanting. This is the second mountain. What does it mean to look beyond yourself and find a moral cause? To forget about independence and discover dependence - to be utterly enmeshed in a web of warm relationships? What does it mean to value intimacy, devotion, responsibility and commitment above individual freedom? In *The Second Mountain* David Brooks explores the meaning and possibilities that scaling a second mountain offer us and the four commitments that most commonly move us there: family, vocation, philosophy and

community. Inspiring, personal and full of joy, this book will help you discover why you were really put on this earth.

the meritocracy trap: The Little Book of Economics Greg Ip, 2013-01-14 An accessible, thoroughly engaging look at how the economy really works and its role in your everyday life Not surprisingly, regular people suddenly are paying a lot closer attention to the economy than ever before. But economics, with its weird technical jargon and knotty concepts and formulas can be a very difficult subject to get to grips with on your own. Enter Greg Ip and his Little Book of Economics. Like a patient, good-natured tutor, Greg, one of today's most respected economics journalists, walks you through everything you need to know about how the economy works. Short on technical jargon and long on clear, concise, plain-English explanations of important terms, concepts, events, historical figures and major players, this revised and updated edition of Greg's bestselling guide clues you in on what's really going on, what it means to you and what we should be demanding our policymakers do about the economy going forward. From inflation to the Federal Reserve, taxes to the budget deficit, you get indispensable insights into everything that really matters about economics and its impact on everyday life Special sections featuring additional resources of every subject discussed and where to find additional information to help you learn more about an issue and keep track of ongoing developments Offers priceless insights into the roots of America's economic crisis and its aftermath, especially the role played by excessive greed and risk-taking, and what can be done to avoid another economic cataclysm Digs into globalization, the roots of the Euro crisis, the sources of China's spectacular growth, and why the gap between the economy's winners and losers keeps widening

the meritocracy trap: Dream Hoarders Richard Reeves, 2018-05-08 Dream Hoarders sparked a national conversation on the dangerous separation between the upper middle class and everyone else. Now in paperback and newly updated for the age of Trump, Brookings Institution senior fellow Richard Reeves is continuing to challenge the class system in America. In America, everyone knows that the top 1 percent are the villains. The rest of us, the 99 percent—we are the good guys. Not so, argues Reeves. The real class divide is not between the upper class and the upper middle class: it is between the upper middle class and everyone else. The separation of the upper middle class from everyone else is both economic and social, and the practice of “opportunity hoarding”—gaining exclusive access to scarce resources—is especially prevalent among parents who want to perpetuate privilege to the benefit of their children. While many families believe this is just good parenting, it is actually hurting others by reducing their chances of securing these opportunities. There is a glass floor created for each affluent child helped by his or her wealthy, stable family. That glass floor is a glass ceiling for another child. Throughout Dream Hoarders, Reeves explores the creation and perpetuation of opportunity hoarding, and what should be done to stop it, including controversial solutions such as ending legacy admissions to school. He offers specific steps toward reducing inequality and asks the upper middle class to pay for it. Convinced of their merit, members of the upper middle class believes they are entitled to those tax breaks and hoarded opportunities. After all, they aren't the 1 percent. The national obsession with the super rich allows the upper middle class to convince themselves that they are just like the rest of America. In Dream Hoarders, Reeves argues that in many ways, they are worse, and that changes in policy and social conscience are the only way to fix the broken system.

the meritocracy trap: Hard Choices Donald Low, 2014-04-22 Singapore is changing. The consensus that the PAP government has constructed and maintained over five decades is fraying. The assumptions that underpin Singaporean exceptionalism are no longer accepted as easily and readily as before. Among these are the ideas that the country is uniquely vulnerable, that this vulnerability limits its policy and political options, that good governance demands a degree of political consensus that ordinary democratic arrangements cannot produce, and that the country's success requires a competitive meritocracy accompanied by relatively little income or wealth redistribution. But the policy and political conundrums that Singapore faces today are complex and defy easy answers. Confronted with a political landscape that is likely to become more contested,

how should the government respond? What reforms should it pursue? This collection of essays suggests that a far-reaching and radical rethinking of the country's policies and institutions is necessary, even if it weakens the very consensus that enabled Singapore to succeed in its first fifty years.

the meritocracy trap: *Diploma Democracy* Mark Bovens, Anchrit Wille, 2017-06-23 Lay politics lies at the heart of democracy. Political offices are the only offices for which no formal qualifications are required. Contemporary political practices are diametrically opposed to this constitutional ideal. Most democracies in Western Europe are diploma democracies - ruled by those with the highest formal qualifications. Citizens with low or medium educational qualifications currently make up about 70 percent of the electorates, yet they have become virtually absent from almost all political arenas. University graduates have come to dominate all political institutions and venues, from political parties, parliaments and cabinets, to organised interests, deliberative settings, and Internet consultations. This rise of a political meritocracy is part of larger trend. In the information society, educational background, like class or religion, is an important source of social and political divides. Those who are well educated tend to be cosmopolitans, whereas the lesser educated citizens are more likely to be nationalists. This book documents the context, contours, and consequences of this rise of a political meritocracy. It explores the domination of higher educated citizens in political participation, civil society, and political office in Western Europe. It discusses the consequences of this rise of a political meritocracy, such as descriptive deficits, policy incongruences, biased standards, and cynicism and distrust. Also, it looks at ways to remedy, or at least mitigate, some of the negative effects of diploma democracy.

the meritocracy trap: The Class Ceiling Friedman, Sam, Laurison, Daniel, 2020-01-06 Politicians continually tell us that anyone can get ahead. But is that really true? This important, best-selling book takes readers behind the closed doors of elite employers to reveal how class affects who gets to the top. Friedman and Laurison show that a powerful 'class pay gap' exists in Britain's elite occupations. Even when those from working-class backgrounds make it into prestigious jobs, they earn, on average, 16% less than colleagues from privileged backgrounds. But why is this the case? Drawing on 175 interviews across four case studies - television, accountancy, architecture, and acting - they explore the complex barriers facing the upwardly mobile. This is a rich, ambitious book that demands we take seriously not just the glass but also the class ceiling.

the meritocracy trap: The Cult of Smart Fredrik deBoer, 2020-08-04 Named one of Vulture's Top 10 Best Books of 2020! Leftist firebrand Fredrik deBoer exposes the lie at the heart of our educational system and demands top-to-bottom reform. Everyone agrees that education is the key to creating a more just and equal world, and that our schools are broken and failing. Proposed reforms variously target incompetent teachers, corrupt union practices, or outdated curricula, but no one acknowledges a scientifically-proven fact that we all understand intuitively: Academic potential varies between individuals, and cannot be dramatically improved. In *The Cult of Smart*, educator and outspoken leftist Fredrik deBoer exposes this omission as the central flaw of our entire society, which has created and perpetuated an unjust class structure based on intellectual ability. Since cognitive talent varies from person to person, our education system can never create equal opportunity for all. Instead, it teaches our children that hierarchy and competition are natural, and that human value should be based on intelligence. These ideas are counter to everything that the left believes, but until they acknowledge the existence of individual cognitive differences, progressives remain complicit in keeping the status quo in place. This passionate, voice-driven manifesto demands that we embrace a new goal for education: equality of outcomes. We must create a world that has a place for everyone, not just the academically talented. But we'll never achieve this dream until the Cult of Smart is destroyed.

the meritocracy trap: The Fires of Vengeance Evan Winter, 2020-11-10 'CAPTIVATING EPIC FANTASY FROM A MAJOR NEW TALENT' Anthony Ryan on *The Rage of Dragons* Desperate to delay an impending attack by the indigenous people of Xidda, Tau and his queen craft a dangerous plan. If Tau succeeds, the queen will have the time she needs to assemble her forces and launch an all-out

assault on her own capital city, where her sister is being propped up as the 'true' Queen of the Omehi. If the city can be taken, if Tsiora can reclaim her throne and reunite her people, then the Omehi might have a chance to survive the coming onslaught. THE FIRES OF VENGEANCE CONTINUES THE UNMISSABLE EPIC FANTASY SERIES THAT BEGAN WITH EVAN WINTER'S ACCLAIMED DEBUT THE RAGE OF DRAGONS. Praise for The Rage of Dragons: 'Intense, inventive and action-packed from beginning to end - a relentlessly gripping, brilliant read' James Islington, author of The Shadow of What Was Lost 'Stunning debut fantasy' Publishers Weekly 'Intense, vivid and brilliantly realised - a necessary read' Anna Smith Spark, author of The Court of Broken Knives 'Impossible to put down' Rick Riordan 'Fans of Anthony Ryan's Blood Song will love this' Django Wexler, author of The Thousand Names 'A Xhosa-inspired world complete with magic, dragons, demons and curses, The Rage of Dragons takes classic fantasy and imbues it with a fresh and exciting twist' Anna Stephens, author of Godblind

the meritocracy trap: Greed Is Dead Paul Collier, John Kay, 2020-07-30 Two of the UK's leading economists call for an end to extreme individualism as the engine of prosperity 'provocative but thought-provoking and nuanced' Telegraph Throughout history, successful societies have created institutions which channel both competition and co-operation to achieve complex goals of general benefit. These institutions make the difference between societies that thrive and those paralyzed by discord, the difference between prosperous and poor economies. Such societies are pluralist but their pluralism is disciplined. Successful societies are also rare and fragile. We could not have built modernity without the exceptional competitive and co-operative instincts of humans, but in recent decades the balance between these instincts has become dangerously skewed: mutuality has been undermined by an extreme individualism which has weakened co-operation and polarized our politics. Collier and Kay show how a reaffirmation of the values of mutuality could refresh and restore politics, business and the environments in which people live. Politics could reverse the moves to extremism and tribalism; businesses could replace the greed that has degraded corporate culture; the communities and decaying places that are home to many could overcome despondency and again be prosperous and purposeful. As the world emerges from an unprecedented crisis we have the chance to examine society afresh and build a politics beyond individualism.

the meritocracy trap: Excellent Sheep William Deresiewicz, 2014-08-19 A groundbreaking manifesto about what our nation's top schools should be—but aren't—providing: "The ex-Yale professor effectively skewers elite colleges, their brainy but soulless students (those 'sheep'), pushy parents, and admissions mayhem" (People). As a professor at Yale, William Deresiewicz saw something that troubled him deeply. His students, some of the nation's brightest minds, were adrift when it came to the big questions: how to think critically and creatively and how to find a sense of purpose. Now he argues that elite colleges are turning out conformists without a compass. Excellent Sheep takes a sharp look at the high-pressure conveyor belt that begins with parents and counselors who demand perfect grades and culminates in the skewed applications Deresiewicz saw firsthand as a member of Yale's admissions committee. As schools shift focus from the humanities to "practical" subjects like economics, students are losing the ability to think independently. It is essential, says Deresiewicz, that college be a time for self-discovery when students can establish their own values and measures of success in order to forge their own paths. He features quotes from real students and graduates he has corresponded with over the years, candidly exposing where the system is broken and offering clear solutions on how to fix it. "Excellent Sheep is likely to make...a lasting mark....He takes aim at just about the entirety of upper-middle-class life in America....Mr. Deresiewicz's book is packed full of what he wants more of in American life: passionate weirdness" (The New York Times).

the meritocracy trap: The Caste of Merit Ajantha Subramanian, 2019-12-03 How the language of "merit" makes caste privilege invisible in contemporary India. Just as Americans least disadvantaged by racism are most likely to endorse their country as post-racial, Indians who have benefited from their upper-caste affiliation rush to declare their country post-caste. In The Caste of Merit, Ajantha Subramanian challenges this comfortable assumption by illuminating the

controversial relationships among technical education, caste formation, and economic stratification in modern India. Through in-depth study of the elite Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)—widely seen as symbols of national promise—she reveals the continued workings of upper-caste privilege within the most modern institutions. Caste has not disappeared in India but instead acquired a disturbing invisibility—at least when it comes to the privileged. Only the lower castes invoke their affiliation in the political arena, to claim resources from the state. The upper castes discard such claims as backward, embarrassing, and unfair to those who have earned their position through hard work and talent. Focusing on a long history of debates surrounding access to engineering education, Subramanian argues that such defenses of merit are themselves expressions of caste privilege. The case of the IITs shows how this ideal of meritocracy serves the reproduction of inequality, ensuring that social stratification remains endemic to contemporary democracies.

the meritocracy trap: Twilight of the Elites Christopher Hayes, 2012 Analyzes scandals in high-profile institutions, from Wall Street and the Catholic Church to corporate America and Major League Baseball, while evaluating how an elite American meritocracy rose throughout the past half-century before succumbing to unprecedented levels of corruption and failure. 75,000 first printing.

the meritocracy trap: Multi-Polar Capitalism Robert Guttman, 2021-12-04 History teaches us important lessons, provided we can discern its patterns. Multi-Polar Capitalism applies this insight to the crucial, yet often underappreciated issue of international monetary relations. When international monetary systems get first put into place successfully, such as the “classic” gold standard in 1879, Bretton Woods in 1945, or the dollar standard in 1982, they structure relations between the system’s centre and the rest of the world so that others can catch up to the leader. But this growth-promoting constellation, a vector for accelerating globalization, runs its course eventually amidst mounting overproduction conditions in key sectors and spreading financial instability. Such periods of global crisis, from the Great Depression of the 1930s to stagflation in the 1970s and creeping deflation during much of the 2010s, force restructuring and policy reforms until conditions are ripe for a renewed phase of sustained expansion. We are facing such a turning point now. As we are moving from a US-dominated world economy towards a multi-polar configuration, we will also see the longstanding dollar standard give way to a multi-currency system. Three currency blocs rooted in the dollar, euro, and yuan will be dominated respectively by the United States, the European Union, and China, each a power centre representing a distinct variant of capitalism. Their complex mix of competition and cooperation necessitates new “rules of the game” promoting the shared pursuit of global public goods, in particular the impending zero-carbon transition, lest we allow fragmentation and conflict shape this next chapter of our history. Multi-Polar Capitalism adds to a century of research and debate on long waves, those roughly half-century cycles first identified by the great Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev in the early 1920s, by highlighting the role of the international monetary system in this distinct boom-and-bust pattern.

the meritocracy trap: The Price of Admission (Updated Edition) Daniel Golden, 2009-01-21 NATIONAL BESTSELLER • “A fire-breathing, righteous attack on the culture of superprivilege.”—Michael Wolff, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *Fire and Fury*, in the New York Times Book Review NOW WITH NEW REPORTING ON OPERATION VARSITY BLUES In this explosive and prescient book, based on three years of investigative reporting, Pulitzer Prize winner Daniel Golden shatters the myth of an American meritocracy. Naming names, along with grades and test scores, Golden lays bare a corrupt system in which middle-class and working-class whites and Asian Americans are routinely passed over in favor of wealthy white students with lesser credentials—children of alumni, big donors, and celebrities. He reveals how a family donation got Jared Kushner into Harvard, and how colleges comply with Title IX by giving scholarships to rich women in “patrician sports” like horseback riding and crew. With a riveting new chapter on Operation Varsity Blues, based on original reporting, *The Price of Admission* is a must-read—not only for parents and students with a personal stake in college admissions but also for those disturbed by the growing divide between ordinary and privileged Americans. Praise for *The Price of*

Admission “A disturbing exposé of the influence that wealth and power still exert on admission to the nation’s most prestigious universities.”—The Washington Post “Deserves to become a classic.”—The Economist

the meritocracy trap: Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap Anthony Muhammad, 2015
Explores the state of the academic achievement gap that exists in U.S. public schools, particularly among poor and minority students, and argues that the mindset that achievement gaps are inevitable are no longer tolerable. Explores ways to close the achievement gap via real-world case studies where principals and educators have adopted new mindsets for education.

the meritocracy trap: *This is what Inequality Looks Like* Youyenn Teo, Kian Woon Kwok, 2019

the meritocracy trap: Happy Ever After Paul Dolan, 2019-01-17 'A passionate, provocative book. It isn't just a self-help book. It is a manifesto for a better society' Sunday Times 'One of the most rigorous articulations of the new mood of acceptance...a persuasive demolition of many of our cultural stories about how we ought to live' Oliver Burkeman, Guardian Paul Dolan, the bestselling author of *Happiness by Design*, shows us how to escape the myth of perfection and find our own route to happiness. Be ambitious; find everlasting love; look after your health ... There are countless stories about how we ought to live our lives. These narratives can make our lives easier, and they might sometimes make us happier too. But they can also trap us and those around us. In *Happy Ever After*, bestselling happiness expert Professor Paul Dolan draws on a variety of studies ranging over wellbeing, inequality and discrimination to bust the common myths about our sources of happiness. He shows that there can be many unexpected paths to lasting fulfilment. Some of these might involve not going into higher education, choosing not to marry, rewarding acts rooted in self-interest and caring a little less about living forever. By freeing ourselves from the myth of the perfect life, we might each find a life worth living.

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