



The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality

By Angus Deaton

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The world is a better place than it used to be. People are healthier, wealthier, and live longer. Yet the escapes from destitution by so many has left gaping inequalities between people and nations. In *The Great Escape*, Angus Deaton--one of the foremost experts on economic development and on poverty--tells the remarkable story of how, beginning 250 years ago, some parts of the world experienced sustained progress, opening up gaps and setting the stage for today's disproportionately unequal world. Deaton takes an in-depth look at the historical and ongoing patterns behind the health and wealth of nations, and addresses what needs to be done to help those left behind.

Deaton describes vast innovations and wrenching setbacks: the successes of antibiotics, pest control, vaccinations, and clean water on the one hand, and disastrous famines and the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the other. He examines the United States, a nation that has prospered but is today experiencing slower growth and increasing inequality. He also considers how economic growth in India and China has improved the lives of more than a billion people. Deaton argues that international aid has been ineffective and even harmful. He suggests alternative efforts--including reforming incentives to drug companies and lifting trade restrictions--that will allow the developing world to bring about its own Great Escape.

Demonstrating how changes in health and living standards have transformed our lives, *The Great Escape* is a powerful guide to addressing the well-being of all nations.

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The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality

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Editorial Review

Review

Angus Deaton, Winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Economics

Winner of the 2013 William G. Bowen Award, Industrial Relations Section of Princeton University

One of Bloomberg Businessweek's Best Books of 2015, chosen by John Snow

One of *Bloomberg/Businessweek* Best Books of 2013, selected by Christopher L. Eisgruber (president of Princeton University)

One of *Forbes Magazine's* Best Books of 2013

Honorable Mention for the 2013 PROSE Award in Economics, Association of American Publishers

Shortlisted for the 2014 Spear's Book Awards in Financial History

Longlisted for the 2013 Business Book of the Year Award, *Financial Times*/Goldman Sachs

A "Best Business Book of the Year for 2013" selected on LinkedIn by Matthew Bishop, Economics

Editor of *The Economist*

Featured in *The Sunday Times* 2013 Holiday Roundup

"If you want to learn about why human welfare overall has gone up so much over time, you should read *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*."--**Bill Gates**

"[O]ne of the most succinct guides to conditions in today's world. . . . The story Deaton tells--the most inspiring human story of all--should give all of us reason for optimism, so long as we are willing to listen to its moral."--**David Leonhardt, *New York Times Book Review***

"[A]n illuminating and inspiring history of how mankind's longevity and prosperity have soared to breathtaking heights in modern times. . . . [Deaton's] book gives a stirring overview of the economic progress and medical milestones that, starting with the Industrial Revolution and accelerating after World War II, have caused life expectancies to soar."--**Fred Andrews, *New York Times***

"[A]n engaging and sure-footed guide to the 'endless dance between progress and inequality . . .'"--**Martha C. Nussbaum, *New Republic***

"Is the world becoming a fairer as well as a richer place? Few economists are better equipped to answer this question than Angus Deaton of Princeton University, who has thought hard about measuring international well-being and is not afraid to roam through history. Refreshingly, Mr Deaton also reaches beyond a purely economic narrative to encompass often neglected dimensions of progress such as better health. . . . [T]he theme requires a big canvas and bold brushwork, and Mr Deaton capably offers both."--***Economist***

"[E]loquently written and deeply researched. . . . For those interested in world poverty, it is unquestionably the most important book on development assistance to appear in a long time."--**Kenneth Rogoff, *Project Syndicate***

"A truly elegant exploration. . . . It offers an erudite sojourn through history, all the way to the domestic and international policy issues pressing in on us today. Unusual for scholarly works in economics, this book is rendered in easily accessible prose, supported by fascinating statistics presented graphically."--**Uwe E. Reinhardt, *NYTimes.com's Economix blog***

"[A] masterful account."--**Anne-Marie Slaughter, *CNN.com***

"As the title of his book suggests, Deaton sketches out the story of how many people have escaped from poverty and early death. It is a powerful tale. In Deaton's hands, the all too frequently forgotten accomplishments of the last century are given prominence that is both refreshing and welcome."--**Edward Hadas, *Reuters BreakingViews***

"*The Great Escape* combines, to a rare degree, technical sophistication, moral urgency, the wisdom of experience, and an engaging and accessible style. It will deepen both your appreciation of the miracle of modern economic growth and your conviction that the benefits can and should be much more widely enjoyed."--**Clive Crook, *Bloomberg News***

"This is a book that deserves to be read by as many people as possible, so that the poverty debates we have in India go beyond ideological grandstanding and the usual television dramatics. . . . The recent years have seen several leading economic thinkers write excellent books for the ordinary reader, and the new Deaton book is firmly in that category."--**Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, *Mint***

"Deaton's lucid book celebrates the riches brought by growth while judiciously explaining why some people are always 'left behind'. He draws a distinction between the inequalities that are opened up by advances in knowledge and those caused by flawed political systems. . . . The book's rich historical and geographical context adds to the power of this message."--**John McDermott, *Financial Times***

"In *The Great Escape*, he dons the hat of an economic historian to provide a fresh perspective on the march of human progress (and its pitfalls) that should inform our current debate about income inequality."--**Konrad Yakabuski, *Globe & Mail***

"It's a privilege to know the author of one of the most important books I've read, not least because it acts as entry point into other significant related books, research and debates. . . . Deaton's work reflects this combined pursuit of economics and ethics, manifested through research in to the wealth and health of nations."--**John Atherton, *Crucible***

"It would make for delightful reading for economists, donors and policy makers."--**Charan Singh, *Business Standard***

"[A] fantastic book about the origins of global poverty. Deaton's humanitarian credentials are unimpeachable, yet he thinks almost all non-health related foreign aid is making global poverty worse. He proposes a variety of alternatives, like massive investments in medical research and cracking down on the small arms trade, that might actually help."--**Zack Beauchamp, *Think Progress***

"[T]hese are wonderful essays, each combining the essential Deaton ingredients of theoretical insight, careful analysis of evidence and graceful writing. There are thought-provoking chapters on the history of health improvements and what has driven them; on material well-being in the US; and on the damage caused by aid to developing countries. Deaton has dedicated many years to thinking about each of these issues, with a long list of academic papers to show for it. Here, he seems to step back and reflect on what he has learned, offering us a sage's wisdom."--**Kitty Stewart, *Times Higher Education***

"*The Great Escape* is a thoughtful work, extensively illustrated with data, from a distinguished economist who tackles a central controversy of our time in a style refreshingly free of ideological baggage."--**John Kay, *Prospect***

"Angus Deaton has written a wonderful book, *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*. . . . Deaton's book is a magisterial overview of health, income, and wealth from the industrial revolution to the present, taking in countries poor and rich. Not just jargon-free but equation-free, the book is

written with a beautifully lucid style. . . . [P]owerfully argued and convincing."--**Michael Marmot, *Lancet***

"Splendid."--**Judith Sloan, *Australian***

"In his new book, *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*, economist Angus Deaton questions the usefulness of all aid, and describes how the greater proportion of the world's poor are found not in Africa but in the booming, yet radically unequal, economies of China and India."--**Paul Theroux, *Barron's***

"The Princeton economist makes a compelling case against the naysayers of economic growth, marshalling a wealth of data and clear-eyed observations to explain how growth allows people to live more freely. . . . Mr. Deaton's seemingly inexhaustible knowledge of all things historical is bound to edify even the most erudite of readers."--**Andrew Lewis, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

"[C]areful and magisterial."--**Pooja Bhatia, *Ozy Media***

"[A] genuine contribution to the emerging literature on rethinking development."--**Andrew Hilton, *Financial World***

"Deaton . . . is perhaps the single most level-headed student of economic development in the world today. . . . *The Great Escape* is an extended meditation on the sources and consequences of inequality."--**David Warsh, *EconomicPrincipals.com***

"Tops my list of must-read books for 2013. Deaton tackles big topics--global improvements to health and well-being, worrisome levels of inequality within nations and between them, and the challenges to curing poverty through foreign aid. His powerful, provocative argument combines careful analysis, humane insight, lucid prose, and a fearless willingness to challenge conventional wisdom. Whether you agree or disagree with its conclusions, this book will force you to rethink your positions about some of the world's most urgent problems."--**Christopher L. Eisgruber, president of Princeton University, *Bloomberg Businessweek***

"The book deserves to be read by all, especially by the students of economic development."--**Tirthankar Roy, *Economic & Political Weekly***

"Professor Deaton hits the psychological nail on the head when he suggests that aid is 'more about satisfying our own need to help.' He identifies the related issue of 'aid illusion'--the belief that poverty in poor countries can be solved by rich people transferring money."--**Peter Foster, *Financial Post***

"This is a fascinating book on health, wealth and inequality."--**Bibek Debroy, *Businessworld***

"Development economist Deaton draws on his lifelong interest in and considerable knowledge of economic development to tell the story of modernization and the rise from worldwide poverty. Chapters illustrating demographic and economic trends utilize well-crafted charts and graphs to depict the rising paths that countries, first the US and western Europe and more recently China and India, have taken as their populations improve their health, education, and income-making abilities."--**Choice**

"*The Great Escape* is an eloquent and passionate description of what sickness and health look like for the world's populations and economies. Deaton's history of health and wealth offers a compelling narrative for both the general reader and academics alike. It raises a range of questions of why some countries falter, why others succeed and what can be done to close gaps between them."--**John Parman, *EH.Net***

"*The Great Escape* is a good place to start if you are looking to increase your own understanding of

inequality as you attempt to add more light than heat to the debates. . . . I found the book humbling, disquieting, and lacking in easy answers to complex questions--precisely why I also found it thoughtful and useful."--**W. Steven Barnett, *Business Economics***

"Deaton's book ends up making a powerful contribution to economists' evolving understanding of the importance of institutions."--**David N. Weil, *Journal of Economic Literature***

"In *The Great Escape* Angus Deaton has provided an insightful, thought-provoking and highly readable overview of the progress of human wellbeing. There is much that both general and specialist audiences will learn from it--I recommend it highly."--**Jeff Borland, *Economic Record***

"[A] wonderful book."--**Martin Wolf, *Financial Times***

"This book is a timely reminder that the conditions that facilitated this progress were created not only through the progress of health science, but through a political effort to ensure that science benefited all."--**Sara Davies, *International Affairs***

"Deaton takes the reader on a richly detailed tour through a landscape of historical narrative, science, data from across the world, and scholarly debate. And he is a superb guide: erudite, lucid, humane, and witty."--**David Weil, *Journal of Economic Literature***

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"Deaton's *The Great Escape* is an uplifting and refreshing read for all who are tired of the many books on economic gloom and environmental doom."--**Rolf A.E. Mueller, *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture***

"Highly accessible."--**Jeremy Warner, *Daily Telegraph***

"*The Great Escape* by Angus Deaton, the Scotsman who got this year's Nobel Prize in economics, is an extremely thoughtful overview of economic development and what goes into it. In ways the book is a stirring tale of the long march since the Industrial Revolution out of generalized poverty to the much more prosperous world we know today, with close attention to the relationship between rising prosperity and generally improved health conditions. Well-written by a superb economist with great command of analysis and data. I recommend it highly."--**John Snow, former Treasury Secretary, one of Bloomberg's Best Books of 2015**

"*The Great Escape* . . . is a thoughtful and optimistic consideration on why some nations are wealthy, and thus healthy, and why others are not."--**Trey Carson, *Review of Austrian Economics***

From the Back Cover

"There is nobody better than Angus Deaton to explain why our lives are longer, healthier, and more prosperous than those of our great-grandparents. The story he tells is much more than an inexorable march of

progress--it has also been unequal, uneven, and incomplete, and at each step, politics has played a defining role. This is a must-read for anybody interested in the wealth and health of nations."--**Daron Acemoglu, coauthor of *Why Nations Fail***

"At once engaging and compassionate, this is an uplifting story by a major scholar."--**Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion***

"Magisterial and superb."--**William Easterly, author of *The White Man's Burden***

"*The Great Escape* tells the two biggest stories in history: how humanity got healthy and wealthy, and why some people got so much healthier and wealthier than others. Angus Deaton, one of the world's leading development economists, takes us on an extraordinary journey--from an age when almost everyone was poor and sick to one where most people have escaped these evils--and he tells us how the billion still trapped in extreme poverty can join in this great escape. Everyone who wants to understand the twenty-first century should read this book."--**Ian Morris, author of *Why the West Rules--for Now***

"Deaton's account of global advances in health is magisterial. It is especially convincing in disentangling economic progress from technological growth as sources of health improvements. A very big story, this book should affect the way we think about human development and the role of science and science-based government programs. The language is modest and graceful, the use of evidence compelling, and the illustrations highly attractive."--**Samuel Preston, University of Pennsylvania**

"This factual, sober, and very timely book deals with issues surrounding the higher incomes and longer lives enjoyed by an increasing proportion of the world's population. It assesses improvements in conditions that would have seemed almost a fantasy for people living only a few generations ago. Deaton's arguments, written in an elegant and accessible style, are powerful and challenge conventional opinions."--**Branko Milanovic, author of *The Haves and the Have-Nots***

"This splendid book discusses how, in the last two hundred fifty years, large numbers of people have achieved levels of well-being that were previously available only to a few individuals, and how this achievement has given rise to equally unprecedented inequalities. Unique in its focus and scope, exceptional knowledge and coherence, and careful argumentation, *The Great Escape* is highly illuminating and a delight to read."--**Thomas Pogge, Yale University**

About the Author

Angus Deaton, winner of the 2015 Nobel Prize in economics, is the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professor of Economics and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Economics Department at Princeton University. His many books include *The Analysis of Household Surveys* and *Economics and Consumer Behavior*. He is a past president of the American Economic Association.

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