

to the many and varied issues challenges. It will already be clear that I dispute the view that inequality is a distinct topic that can be understood in a self-contained way. In fact, it is also about how we investigate the social world, our methods and concepts, and how we construe history and social change more broadly. If we are to understand why inequality has become such a pressing and urgent topic, we need to synthesize across many fields of study and not default back to narrow framings, measurement tools, or perspectives.

Accordingly, each chapter discusses a discrete topic and seeks to introduce key issues in recent research for a broad readership. None of the chapters can cover all the important contributions in each field, but I hope they serve as effective introductions to these topics. The originality of my book, however, lies in the way I link these topics together. Therefore, to appreciate my argument as a whole, this book needs to be read from cover to cover. Although I hope readers who want a succinct discussion of particular topics can use the index to find the where in the text where they are discussed. I would urge readers to recognize that the juxtaposition of topics rarely considered together is the most important feature of my book.

Readers should bear in mind the ordering of the chapters, which builds my argument sequentially. The first part of my book introduces the key theoretical frames that underpin my core arguments about time and historicity. My intention is both to introduce the thinking of influential theorists on inequality, ranging across such canonical figures as Thomas Piketty (Chapters 1 and 3), Pierre Bourdieu (Chapter 2), and Karl Marx (Chapter 3), but more particularly to bring their arguments into dialogue with one another. The sequencing here is not to be conflated with analytical priorities. I don't start in Chapter 1 by considering the economics of income distribution because I somehow think that this is the foundation and every other aspect of inequality is derived from it. Far from it, in fact. Instead, I start with this dimension because crucial contributions from economists help highlight why the topic of inequality has leapt to the fore, but also because of the limitations of this work. My book therefore proceeds in the manner of a Russian doll: each chapter peels away to reveal another, and each one takes us closer to the heart of the doll.