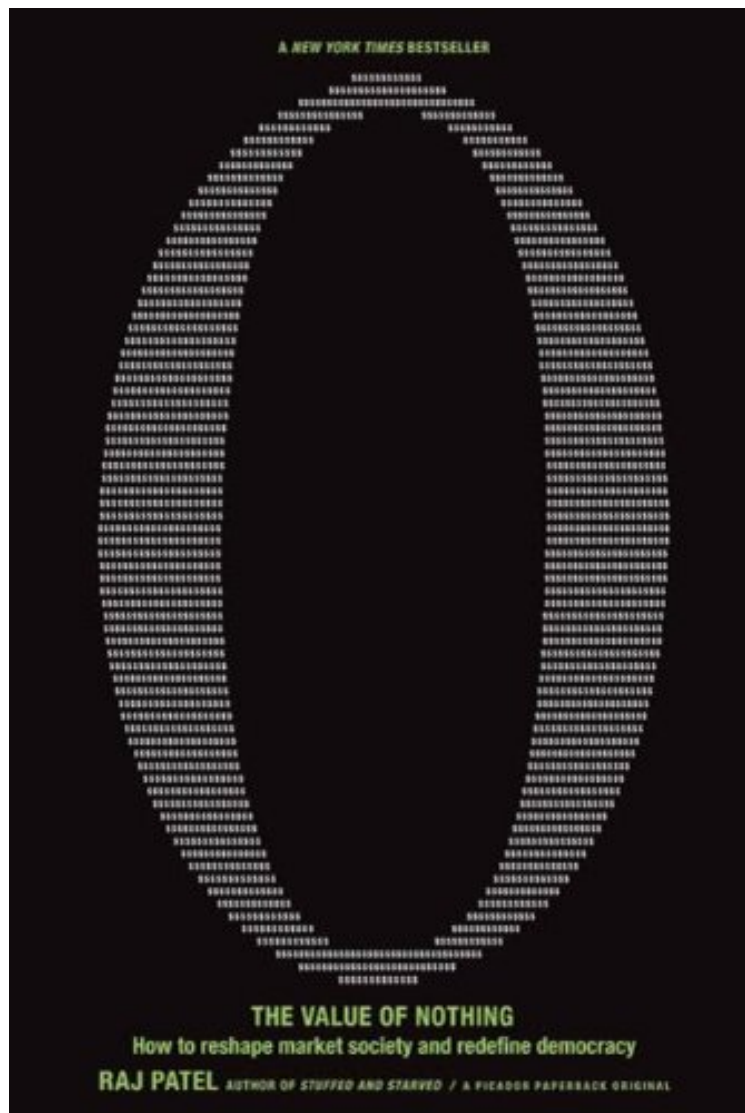


The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy

Raj Patel

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Raj Patel : The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great Primer on criticisms of CapitalismBy J. AragonRaj Patel has written a well-organized, well-written book that criticizes capitalism and to some extent the form of "democracy" that exists in the West. At the same time, though, he also offers international examples of how different groups of people

have countered neo-liberal economic policies to better help people in their village, region, or nation-state. Patel did not rely on dry, jargon filled academese. This book is written for the lay reader and the student of politics, sociology, social justice or even economics will also enjoy the book. It has mass appeal and would be useful in the college classroom. I will definitely offer it as a theoretical book option in one of my classes. Patel's analysis draws connections between sustainability, class, biodiversity, race, gender and more. And, he does it without the reader feeling like he is wagging his finger at you. This is what I refer to as a must-read. One of my favorite parts (this is not verbatim from page 174): The real value of something....is to meet the need for well-being. How true. I don't eat beef, but his explanation of the \$200 hamburger will hopefully give some carnivores some pause. Overall, I enjoyed each section and he puts all sorts of good information together in one book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.
Something we knew in our bones
By Orwell
The author addresses some key aspects of the modern industrialized 21 st century world, where we as a society have decided to disproportionately reward speculators and corrupt CEOs and literally give slave wages to the workers and real producers. Indeed, this modern era seems dominated by "faux" capitalism or as some would accurately say "crony capitalism". A true free market is disliked by large enterprises which want all the rewards and none of the risk. Small and medium sized businesses are virtually gone along with living wages in this so called high productivity and technology dominated era. In the world of food and agriculture this has had a devastating impact on communities around the world. It is not just democracy, but sustainability that is at stake when a politically connected elite can loot from the rest. A grim future indeed.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.
A Good Place to Begin Rethinking Economics
By Biz Book Reader
Raj Patel's "The Value of Nothing" provides a wide-ranging and accessible introduction to some of the key assumptions implicit in modern "market-based" economics -- and a call to the reader to evaluate the costs and benefits of those assumptions en route to considering alternate ways of thinking about our economy. His central idea is that the notion of the economy as a realm distinct from the rest of society is a harmful myth that damages us through its selective allocation of property and rights (when we fail to preserve the commons) as well as its selective association of responsibility (when we fail to understand externalities). The first half of the book, which focuses on history and key concepts, seems slightly stronger to me, though I think even some examples here (such as approximating the full ecological cost of a Big Mac at \$200) could be even more compelling with more detail. The second half of the book, in which Patel touches on case studies where societies are attempting to redefine how groups allocate resources and declare various rights, is kind of all over the place, but I suspect Patel would argue that such messiness is largely a function of the extensive and decentralized work society will need to undertake in order to effect meaningful change. Patel is under no illusions about the scope of effort required to tackle the social, economic and ecological issues facing us, and he avoids giving any easy answers; in the end, he is arguing for nothing less than a complete overhaul of how we approach our daily lives and orient ourselves to be more engaged members of a community.

"A deeply though-provoking book about the dramatic changes we must make to save the planet from financial madness."--Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine*
Opening with Oscar Wilde's observation that "nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing," Patel shows how our faith in prices as a way of valuing the world is misplaced. He reveals the hidden ecological and social costs of a hamburger (as much as \$200), and asks how we came to have markets in the first place. Both the corporate capture of government and our current financial crisis, Patel argues, are a result of our democratically bankrupt political system. If part one asks how we can rebalance society and limit markets, part two answers by showing how social organizations, in America and around the globe, are finding new ways to describe the world's worth. If we don't want the market to price every aspect of our lives, we need to learn how such organizations have discovered democratic ways in which people, and not simply governments, can play a crucial role in deciding how we might share our world and its resources in common. This short, timely and inspiring book reveals that our current crisis is not simply the result of too much of the wrong kind of economics. While we need to rethink our economic model, Patel argues that the larger failure beneath the food, climate and economic crises is a political one. If economics is about choices, Patel writes, it isn't often said who gets to make them. *The Value of Nothing* offers a fresh and accessible way to think about economics and the choices we will all need to make in order to create a sustainable economy and society.