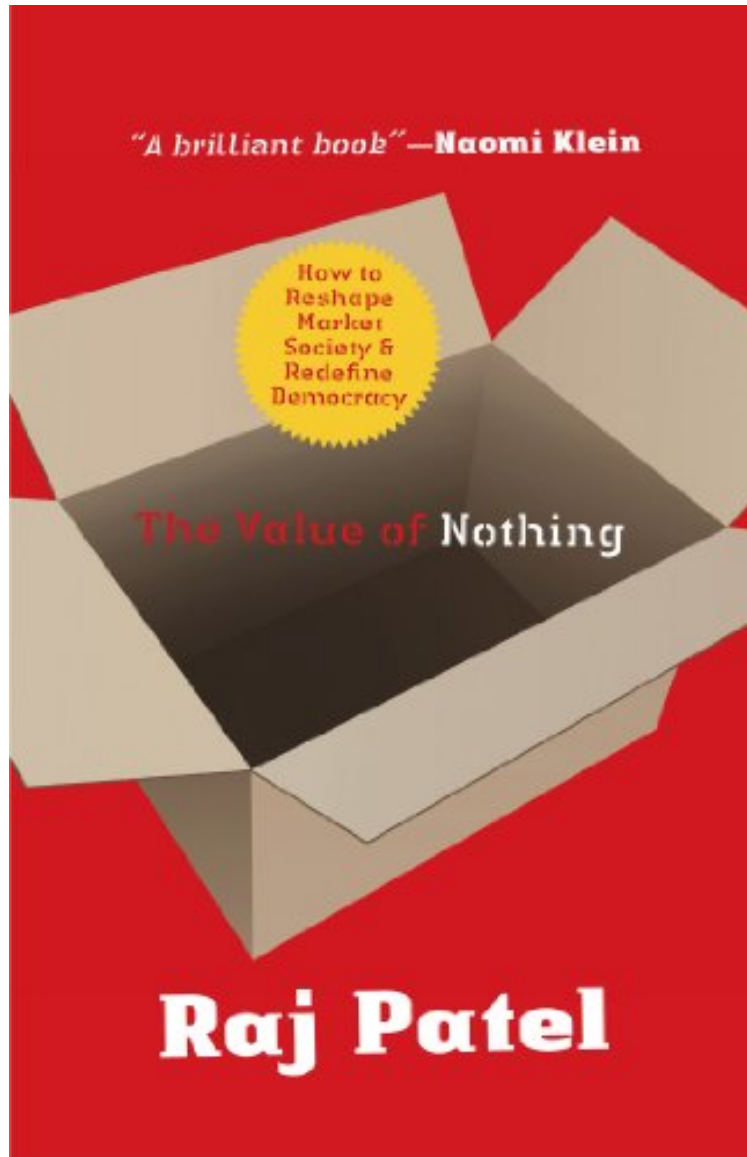


(Free and download) The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society Redefine Democracy

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

Raj Patel

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

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great Primer on criticisms of Capitalism By J. Aragon Raj 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 21st 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.

Credit has crunched, debt has turned toxic, the gears of the world economy have ground to a halt. Yet despite its failures, the same market-driven ideas are being applied to everything from the food crisis to climate change. It's time to ask one of the most fundamental questions a society can address: why do things cost what they do? Radical and original, *The Value of Nothing* uses basic but forgotten economics and cutting-edge neuroscience to show how the price we pay for everything, from burgers to ballistic missiles, is systematically distorted and to explore some rich alternatives to market fundamentalism.

With great lucidity and confidence in a dazzling array of fields, Patel reveals how we inflate the cost of things we can (and often should) live without, while assigning absolutely no value to the resources we all need to survive. This is a deeply thought-provoking book about the dramatic changes we must make to save the planet from financial madness; argued with so much humour and humanity that the enormous tasks ahead feel both doable and desirable. This is Raj Patel's great gift: he makes even the most radical ideas seem not only reasonable, but inevitable. A brilliant book.

Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo* and *The Shock Doctrine*  
Bracingly written and full of surprises, *The Value of Nothing* is itself invaluable, showing us a path out of the darkness of the economics woods.

Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*  
Raj Patel has worked for the World Bank, interned at the WTO, consulted for the UN and been involved in international campaigns against his former employers. Currently a researcher at the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal in South Africa and a visiting scholar at the Center for African Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, his education includes degrees from Oxford, the London School of Economics and Cornell University.

From Publishers Weekly  
Starred . Expanding on his analysis and recommendations in *Stuffed and Starved*, which located the horrifying imbalance in the world's food system in its profit-driven framework, activist and academic Patel critiques free market culture at a moment of universal crisis, both economic and environmental. Beginning with a historically grounded account of market society's operative assumptions, the way capitalism sets the terms of value, Patel takes aim at the notion of *Homo economicus*: a vision of human beings as self-interested utility-maximizers integral to market society's dollar-valuation of everything. Through a shrewd and absorbing discussion, Patel exposes

the flaws in the model of the world in which people are... prepared to override their own better judgment in service of their selfish natures and the nominal separation of the economy and the state, describing the relationship as compromised but also more plastic than we are often led to believe. With due attention to the developing world as well as Europe and North America, the author offers examples of the countermovement underway and urges us to build on a vision of ourselves far more extensive, generous and hopeful than that confined to market society's Homo economicus. (Jan.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

ldquo;With great lucidity and confidence in a dazzling array of fields, Patel reveals how we inflate the cost of things we can (and often should) live without, while assigning absolutely no value to the resources we all need to survive. This is a deeply thought-provoking book about the dramatic changes we must make to save the planet from financial madness -- argued with so much humor and humanity that the enormous tasks ahead feel both doable and desirable. This is Raj Patel's great gift: he makes even the most radical ideas seem not only reasonable, but inevitable. A brilliant book.rdquo; Naomi Klein, author *The Shock Doctrine*ldquo;As we confront the crisis in the worldview of orthodox economics, Raj Patel offers us a whole new way to think about price and value. Bracingly written and full of surprises, *The Value of Nothing* is itself invaluable, showing us a path out of the darkness of the economic woods.rdquo; Michael Pollan, author of *In Defense of Food* and *The Omnivore's Dilemma*ldquo;With *THE VALUE OF NOTHING*, Raj Patel has done something of great value: in language utterly clear, concise, literate, and engaging, he takes readers through the murk and mess of the economy's collapse. He shows the hows and whys, how we seem bent on a repeat (no real substantive changes to the practices that got us where we are, at the policy level), but also how we, in our communities, if not larger concerted efforts, have some power to right the course. What Raj Patel did so brilliantly with food in *STUFFED AND STARVED*, he now does so with money and the economy.rdquo; Rick Simonson, Elliott Bay Book Companyldquo;In this riveting eye-opener of a book, Patel dismantles with great fluidity and precision the reigning theory of the free market and its applications: how it creates in our global society deep inequalities of power, based solely on the diktat that our fundamental needs (water, decent food, housing, health care) are worthless because not profitable, and thus leading to economic chaos and a loss of community empowerment. But there is also hope in the emergence of social groups around the world who are insisting and reclaiming 'the right to have rights' through their democratic engagement. Patel brilliantly shows us how both a fairer society and a sustainable economy are possible as long as we are willing to seize back our freedom to choose from colluding governments and corporations. 'The Value of Nothing' should be required reading for any self-respecting citizen of the world.rdquo; Marie du Vaure, *Vroman's Bookstore*ldquo;It's only January 2010, and we already have a candidate for the most important book of the year. Raj Patel's *The Value of Nothing* takes aim at the conservative orthodoxy that has dominated American politics and economics for the last several decades, and he scores a direct hit.rdquo; Bill Petrocelli, *Book Passage*About the AuthorRaj Patel, the author of *Stuffed and Starved*, is an activist and academic who has been hailed as "a visionary" for his prescience about the food crisis. Raj has worked for the World Bank and the World Trade Organization and has protested against them on four continents. He is currently a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley's Center for African Studies, an Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a fellow at the Institute for Food and Development Policy, also known as Food First.