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http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/


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USA

Mark Leibovich, author of This Town.

MOYERS & Co. 8-25-13

An interview of Mark Leibovich, author of This Town. A dark view of Corruption
Washington, DC: Congress/White House/the Rich: few honest or courageous men or
women there. Why? Money funneled by the wealthy through lobbyists. Wall Street
has tripled its lobbying money in the past few years, because it works. Supporters of
the status quo of corporate power and money are lavishly rewarded. Yes there are
differences between the two parties, and they are polarized over legislation, but
Congress is fully bipartisan by the money to be made and the conformity to power while
in office. BP’s behavior after the spill is a typical example. See Bill Moyers.com for
the program and more. Moyers is a chief ethical opponent of US capitalism. Don’t miss
his interviews of the well-informed, honest, and courageous men and women of our
nation.-- Dick

Books

“This Town” by Mark Leibovich

Review By Craig Fehrman

| GLOBE CORRESPONDENT
AUGUST 07, 2013


Early in “This Town,” Mark Leibovich’s new book about Washington D.C., is the following
description of Ken Duberstein: “[T]he standard line on Duberstein is that he spent six and a
half months as Reagan’s chief of staff and twenty-four years (and counting) dining out on it.”

Leibovich, the chief national correspondent at The New York Times Magazine, does a
wonderful job writing about Washington’s elite. (He won a National Magazine Award for his profile of Politico’s Mike Allen; his profile of MSNBC’s Chris Matthews is even better.) And while “This Town” falls a bit short of his magazine work, it still surveys the pettiness, pointlessness, and obscene wealth of well-connected operators like Duberstein — and of the media that report on them. “Washington may not serve the country well,” Leibovich writes, but it “has in fact worked splendidly for Washington itself.”

There’s a touch of Tom Wolfe in Leibovich’s subtitle: “Two Parties and a Funeral — Plus Plenty of Valet Parking! — in America’s Gilded Capital.” He shares the New Journalist’s affection for lists (a Democrat soiree serves “milk chocolate fondue, mini lobster rolls, and $420 bottles of Louis Roederer champagne”), along with his satiric sense of humor.

The funeral is Tim Russert’s, in the spring of 2008. “This Town” starts there and continues through the reelection of Barack Obama. The closest the book comes to a narrative is in charting the president’s administration as it lapses into the ways of Washington. After his first election, Obama’s transition team gets a “No Ego, No Glory” memo that outlined their objectives as civil servants — and not as people eyeing lucrative post-political employment. By 2012, the internal memos feel more familiar, and Leibovich uncovers “The Magic of Valerie,” or 33 talking points about senior adviser Valerie Jarrett. The best one: “Valerie is someone here who other people inside the building know they can trust. (need examples.)”
“This Town” also includes some tawdry set pieces — D.C.’s power lunch circuit, the White House Correspondents’ Dinner, the post-debate spin rooms. There’s rarely much action in these scenes. What makes them work are Leibovich’s details, which are frequently juicy enough to dine out on. At Russert’s funeral, even the male mourners arrive wearing “Queen Elizabeth levels of Pan-Cake makeup as they are coming straight from their TV standups.” Others keep thrusting business cards at the hosts of MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” — “A new low, even for Washington tackiness,” says one, Mika Brzezinski.

Is it a new low? After all, way back in 1988, Joan Didion could savage the city’s “self-created and self-referring class.” But Leibovich argues that the pesky new media, our burgeoning celebrity culture, and above all a sharp increase in the sheer number of dollars have combined to change things. “‘Insider Washington’ is much larger than it used to be,” he writes, pointing to the way small PR firms and consulting groups have merged into “integrated services” behemoths.

It all adds up to what the locals winkingly call “This Town,” a place where fakeness is so pervasive it feels like authenticity — and from which it’s virtually impossible to be expelled.

But one more question remains: will Leibovich’s book change anything? Washington insiders won’t find many surprises. After all, the only reason he can quote the “standard line” about Ken Duberstein is that hundreds of people have quoted it before, even if they weren’t anxious to see it in print. Leibovich’s reporting has kicked off a few interesting conversations — notably about how Washington’s clubbiness will fare opposite its increasingly partisan politics. (The best bet seems to be a future with two “towns,” one for each side.)

[WHAT’ MUST WE DO? --D]
A few years ago a friend advised me that if I wanted to know what was going on in the real world, I should read the business pages. Although my lifelong interest has been in the study of religion, I am always willing to expand my horizons; so I took the advice, vaguely fearful that I would have to cope with a new and baffling vocabulary. Instead I was surprised to discover that most of the concepts I ran across were quite familiar.

Expecting a terra incognita, I found myself instead in the land of déjà vu. The lexicon of *The Wall Street Journal* and the business sections of *Time* and *Newsweek* turned out to bear a striking resemblance to Genesis, the Epistle to the Romans, and Saint Augustine's City of God. Behind descriptions of market reforms, monetary policy, and the convolutions of the Dow, I gradually made out the pieces of a grand narrative about the inner meaning of human history, why things had gone wrong, and how to put them right. Theologians call these myths of origin, legends of the fall, and doctrines of sin and redemption. But here they were again, and in only thin disguise: chronicles about the creation of wealth, the seductive temptations of statism, captivity to faceless economic cycles, and, ultimately, salvation through the advent of free markets, with a small dose of ascetic belt tightening along the way, especially for the East Asian economies.
The East Asians' troubles, votaries argue, derive from their heretical deviation from free-
market orthodoxy—they were practitioners of "crony capitalism," of "ethnocapitalism," of
"statist capitalism," not of the one true faith. The East Asian financial panics, the Russian debt
repudictions, the Brazilian economic turmoil, and the U.S. stock market's $1.5 trillion
"correction" momentarily shook belief in the new dispensation. But faith is strengthened by
adversity, and the Market God is emerging renewed from its trial by financial "contagion."
Since the argument from design no longer proves its existence, it is fast becoming a
postmodern deity—believed in despite the evidence. Alan Greenspan vindicated this
tempered faith in testimony before Congress last October. A leading hedge fund had just lost
billions of dollars, shaking market confidence and precipitating calls for new federal
regulation. Greenspan, usually Delphic in his comments, was decisive. He believed that
regulation would only impede these markets, and that they should continue to be self-
regulated. True faith, Saint Paul tells us, is the evidence of things unseen.

Soon I began to marvel at just how comprehensive the business theology is. There were
even sacraments to convey salvific power to the lost, a calendar of entrepreneurial saints, and
what theologians call an "eschatology"—a teaching about the "end of history." My curiosity
was piqued. I began cataloguing these strangely familiar doctrines, and I saw that in fact there
lies embedded in the business pages an entire theology, which is comparable in scope
if not in profundity to that of Thomas Aquinas or Karl Barth. It needed only to be
systematized for a whole new Summa to take shape.

At the apex of any theological system, of course, is its doctrine of God. In the new
theology this celestial pinnacle is occupied by The Market, which I capitalize to
signify both the mystery that enshrouds it and the reverence it inspires in business folk.
Different faiths have, of course, different views of the divine attributes. In Christianity, God
has sometimes been defined as omnipotent (possessing all power), omniscient (having all
knowledge), and omnipresent (existing everywhere). Most Christian theologies, it is true,
hedge a bit. They teach that these qualities of the divinity are indeed there, but are hidden
from human eyes both by human sin and by the transcendence of the divine itself. In "light
inaccessible" they are, as the old hymn puts it, "hid from our eyes." Likewise, although The
Market, we are assured, possesses these divine attributes, they are not always completely
evident to mortals but must be trusted and affirmed by faith. "Further along," as another old
gospel song says, "we'll understand why."

As I tried to follow the arguments and explanations of the economist-theologians who justify
The Market's ways to men, I spotted the same dialectics I have grown fond of in the many
years I have pondered the Thomists, the Calvinists, and the various schools of modern
religious thought. In particular, the econologians' rhetoric resembles what is sometimes
called "process theology," a relatively contemporary trend influenced by the philosophy of
Alfred North Whitehead. In this school although God wills to possess the classic attributes, He does not yet possess them in full, but is definitely moving in that direction. This conjecture is of immense help to theologians for obvious reasons. It answers the bothersome puzzle of theodicy: why a lot of bad things happen that an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God—especially a benevolent one—would not countenance. **Process theology also seems to offer considerable comfort to the theologians of The Market.** It helps to explain the dislocation, pain, and disorientation that are the result of transitions from economic heterodoxy to free markets.

1. **The Market as God - Harvey Cox - The Atlantic**
   Mar 1, 1999 - According to theologian Harvey Cox, business and theology aren't so far apart. Capitalism is becoming religion, and The Market is the deity of ...

2. **The Market as God by Harvey Cox | Byliner**
   https://www.byliner.com/harvey-cox/stories/the-market-as-god
   A few years ago a friend advised me that if I wanted to know what was going on in the real world, I should read the business pages. Although my lifelong interest ...

3. **[PDF]**
   AN ESSAY ON THE MARKET AS GOD - the Rutgers Journal of Law ...
   by DM Warner - 2002 - Cited by 5 - Related articles

4. **Politicalprof - Harvey Cox, The Market as God**
   politicalprof.tumblr.com/post/4720119796

5. **Harvey Cox: The Religion of the Market - Blog - Lee Van Ham | One ...**
   leevanham.com/blog/2012/.../harvey-cox-the-religion-of-the-market.htm...
   Oct 12, 2012 - One, entitled “The Market as God,” written by Harvey Cox, who at the time was part of the Harvard Divinity School, had appeared in the Atlantic ...

   johnharmstrong.typepad.com/john_h.../04/the-market-as-god.html
   Apr 20, 2010 - Harvard theologian Harvey Cox was correct when he wrote in the Atlantic... in March of 1999 that in America we now see “The Market as God.
INCOME INEQUALITY, MINIMAL REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT OF BUSINESS, ACCEPTANCE OF PLUTOCRACY, REJECTION OF UNIONS.
BILL MOYERS INTERVIEWS CHRYSTIA FREELAND AND MATT TAIBBI: Income inequality has soared to the highest level since the Great Depression, with the top one percent taking 93 percent of the income earned in the first year after the recovery, the first full year after the recovery. Why are the two candidates not talking about inequality growing at breakneck speed?

CHRYSTIA FREELAND- 

And this guy, okay, he is now the chief economist of Citigroup. He wrote this when he was an academic economist. But so it’s, he’s hardly, you know, some kind of Marxist on the barricades. His argument was that part of the reason the financial crisis happened is the entire intellectual establishment, not just people inside investment banks, but regulators, academic economists, financial journalists, had all been captured by the financial sector’s vision of how the economy should work. And in particular, light touch regulation.

And I think there is a broader cognitive capture of you might call it the intellectual class, the public intellectuals, around maybe the inevitability of plutocracy. You know,
as Matt was saying, this notion that if you’re poor, it’s your own fault. You’re part of this dependent 47 percent. Unions are very bad. All of that sort of stuff.

Matt Taibbi-
"Merging of state and private power where losers don't lose anymore.....They end up with greater market share than they did before."


Go to home page and under the video interview window is "Read the Transcript" button. Use the vertical slide bar to move up and down the article.

from Fayetteville Free Weekly
The Bare Minimum  By Rachel Birdsell
Did you know if you’re the breadwinner in a two-person family and you’re working full time and making minimum wage, you’re already earning $50 less than the national poverty level for a 2-person household? If there are three of you in the family, you’re making $4,100 less than the national poverty level. In 1983, you could work for minimum wage and you’d be above poverty level for a two person household, and you’d only be $1,252 under it for a three person household. Rest is here.

<http://www.freeweekly.com/2013/08/01/the-bare-minimum/#comment-23348>

PALLIATIVES USA

E-mail

SNAP Feeds Those In Need
By Roy Ockert  NW Arkansas Times (July 27, 2013)

Print item
E-mail
For at least the 38th time the U.S. House of Representatives voted last week to repeal all or part of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 — an exercise in futility meant only to make a political statement over and over. [Ockert establishes need for SNAP clearly with logic and a host of facts. —Dick]

GLOBAL

HEDGES: GLOBAL US CAPITALISM

Hedges: Murdering the Wretched of the Earth

Our enemy is not radical Islam. It is global capitalism. It is a world where the wretched of the earth are forced to bow before the dictates of the marketplace, where children go hungry as global corporate elites siphon away the world’s wealth and natural resources and where our troops and U.S.-backed militaries carry out massacres on city streets. Egypt offers a window into the coming dystopia. The wars of survival will mark the final stage of human habitation of the planet. And if you want to know what they will look like, visit any city morgue in Cairo.

Murdering the Wretched of the Earth

Posted on Aug 14, 2013 [from David D Aug. 15. —Dick]

AP/Ahmed Gomaa

By Chris Hedges

Radical Islam is the last refuge of the Muslim poor. The mandated five prayers a day give the
only real structure to the lives of impoverished believers. The careful rituals of washing before prayers in the mosque, the strict moral code, along with the understanding that life has an ultimate purpose and meaning, keep hundreds of millions of destitute Muslims from despair. The fundamentalist ideology that rises from oppression is rigid and unforgiving. It radically splits the world into black and white, good and evil, apostates and believers. It is bigoted and cruel to women, Jews, Christians and secularists, along with gays and lesbians. But at the same time it offers to those on the very bottom of society a final refuge and hope. The massacres of hundreds of believers in the streets of Cairo signal not only an assault against a religious ideology, not only a return to the brutal police state of Hosni Mubarak, but the start of a holy war that will turn Egypt and other poor regions of the globe into a caldron of blood and suffering.

The only way to break the hold of radical Islam is to give its followers a stake in the wider economy, the possibility of a life where the future is not dominated by grinding poverty, repression and hopelessness. If you live in the sprawling slums of Cairo or the refugee camps in Gaza or the concrete hovels in New Delhi, every avenue of escape is closed. You cannot get an education. You cannot get a job. You do not have the resources to marry. You cannot challenge the domination of the economy by the oligarchs and the generals. The only way left for you to affirm yourself is to become a martyr, or shahid. Then you will get what you cannot get in life—a brief moment of fame and glory. And while what will take place in Egypt will be defined as a religious war, and the acts of violence by the insurgents who will rise from the bloodied squares of Cairo will be defined as terrorism, the engine for this chaos is not religion but the collapsing economy of a world where the wretched of the earth are to be subjugated and starved or shot. The lines of battle are being drawn in Egypt and across the globe. Adli Mansour, the titular president appointed by the military dictator of Egypt, Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi, has imposed a military-led government, a curfew and a state of emergency. They will not be lifted soon.

The lifeblood of radical movements is martyrdom. The Egyptian military has provided an ample supply. The faces and the names of the sanctified dead will be used by enraged clerics to call for holy vengeance. And as violence grows and the lists of martyrs expand, a war will be ignited that will tear Egypt apart. Police, Coptic Christians, secularists, Westerners, businesses, banks, the tourism industry and the military will become targets. Those radical Islamists who were persuaded by the Muslim Brotherhood that electoral politics could work and brought into the system will go back underground, and many of the rank and file of the Muslim Brotherhood will join them. Crude bombs will be set off. Random attacks and assassinations by gunmen will puncture daily life in Egypt as they did in the 1990s when I was in Cairo for The New York Times, although this time the attacks will be wider and more fierce, far harder to control or ultimately crush.

What is happening in Egypt is a precursor to a wider global war between the world’s elites and the world’s poor, a war caused by diminishing resources, chronic unemployment and underemployment, overpopulation, declining crop yields caused by climate change, and rising food prices. Thirty-three percent of Egypt’s 80 million people are 14 or younger, and millions live under or just above the poverty line, which the World Bank sets at a daily income of $2 in that nation. The poor in Egypt spend more than half their income on food—often food that has little nutritional value. An estimated 13.7 million Egyptians, or 17 percent of the population, suffered from food insecurity in 2011, compared with 14 percent in 2009, according to a report by the U.N. World Food Program and the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). Malnutrition is endemic among poor children,
with 31 percent under 5 years old stunted in growth. Illiteracy runs at more than 70 percent.

In “Les Misérables” Victor Hugo described war with the poor as one between the “egoists” and the “outcasts.” The egoists, Hugo wrote, had “the bemusement of prosperity, which blunts the sense, the fear of suffering which in some cases goes so far as to hate all sufferers, and unshakable complacency, the ego so inflated that is stifles the soul.” The outcasts, who were ignored until their persecution and deprivation morphed into violence, had “greed and envy, resentment at the happiness of others, the turmoil of the human element in search of personal fulfillment, hearts filled with fog, misery, needs, and fatalism, and simple, impure ignorance.”

The belief systems the oppressed embrace can be intolerant, but these belief systems are a response to the injustice, state violence and cruelty inflicted on them by the global elites. **Our enemy is not radical Islam. It is global capitalism.** It is a world where the wretched of the earth are forced to bow before the dictates of the marketplace, where children go hungry as global corporate elites siphon away the world's wealth and natural resources and where our troops and U.S.-backed militaries carry out massacres on city streets. **Egypt** offers a window into the coming dystopia. The wars of survival will mark the final stage of human habitation of the planet. And if you want to know what they will look like, visit any city morgue in Cairo

**TWO ITEMS ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Climate Catastrophe Coming to a City Near You**

[The link between capitalism and global warming/climate change is well-established. The same is true (wars over resources, e.g.) of the link between capitalism and wars. Nuclear war must be included in any list of chief dangers to the planet and species. See the several newsletters pertaining to them. –Dick]

**Dennis Trainor, Jr., Video Feature, NationofChange, August 14, 2013:** A study by the Global Carbon Project says a continued increase in carbon dioxide emissions means the planet could see up to triple the maximum 2-degree target set by the United Nations in 2010 and heat of the planet up enough to usher in a temperature rise of up to 6 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. So eat local, wear a Jimmy Carter Cardigan while driving your Prius and compost all you want, but **unless the humans of the world slam on the breaks and do a 180 turn radically altering the way we produce, consume and live, Armageddon like conditions will be coming to a town near you this century**

READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
COMPARING NATIONS: IDEOLOGIES OF SHORT AND LONG-TERM GAINS: US AND BOLIVIA. Dick Bennett

A distinct feature of US politics is its arrogant insulation: seldom are other countries’ systems applied to assess the way things are done here. That application is one of the great gifts, too little recognized, given us by Noam Chomsky. In book after book he compares and contrasts the US to other countries. For example, over the years he has cited books and films and reports containing knowledge of successful, diverse government-coordinated health systems abroad, but you never knew it during the past years of parochial, ignorance-based struggle in the US, because the US is ruled by the economic ideology of short-term gains regardless of consequences.

In contrast is Bolivia. Consider the issue of ecology. President Jimmy Carter tried to turn the nation toward independence from fossil fuels, as symbolized by the solar panels he had placed on the White House roof. But Ronald Reagan used jingoism and demagoguery to increase national war-preparing and –making, as symbolized by removing the solar panels.

But Bolivia sponsored the “People’s Summit, with its call for a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, an appeal voiced by indigenous people worldwide and a challenge to the predatory and lemminglike pursuit of short-term gain by the rich.” And “Chapter 4, Article 8 of Bolivia’s law No. 071 calls for the promotion of peace and the elimination of all nuclear, chemical, and biological arms and weapons of mass destruction.” But the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which bans all nuclear explosions, has not been ratified by the US. (Chomsky and Polk, Nuclear War and Environmental Catastrophe [2013], pp. 82, 158, 161.)

A CASE OF OVER ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

By Kaye Faulkner MAinha6995@aol.com, 7-8=13

The current press accounts for the failure of the economy by emphasizing the exploitative relationship to the extent that 1% of the population own 40% of property. There has been talk of two economies. Much of the so called analysis is focused to frighten rather than inform the population. I cannot imagine what is meant by the allusion to two economies unless to mark that the rich one has exploited the other one—the reason for the difference of poverty and of wealth. The recent stock market activity shows a swapping of ownership claims, the demand for which forces the prices of stocks up. It does not necessarily show that any productive activity will be forthcoming—only the hope that it will establish owner’s claims for some putative profit that will emerge because of ownership.
Marx 160 years ago made the point that capitalism is the monopoly ownership of the means of production by one class while the under-class has nothing to sell but its labor. (Capital is a social relationship, not only a factor.) This was the point that Mitt Romney was making, whether he knew it or not, in his speech of the 47% to his rich backers and the consequences for the working poor, which characterizes most of the rest of us. He should not be so barefaced about his views; while offensive they are true and costly for him to articulate. He was paraphrasing Marx whether he liked it, realized it or not. Raymond Postgate’s quote fits as well: “Some men are born booted and spurred and others with saddles on their backs to be ridden.” This has characterized American capitalism and the American economy from the start. Should we agree with Postgate’s point: what can we do about it—rebel? Charles and Mary Beard in An Economic Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution talked of the property class and their importance in forming the much touted American Constitution. Colonial business wanted to do their own thing without the interference of the British. After a while deprivation gets under the skin leading to spontaneous outbursts of contempt and anger—which in all probability explains some portion of the Muslim attitude to the United States government and its support of our businesses abroad and the exploitation of some number of Middle East countries.

Part of the dynamics of capitalism is the need to reduce costs (to increase profits) whenever and wherever possible. Machine production enables the capitalist to substitute capital for labor, thereby reducing the capitalist’s wages bill. The ideal factory would be where you have no workers but one to turn the machinery on and never off. The other side of the production equation is the importance to control the market—which is the reason that the Republicans demand for “free” markets for their subalterns to accommodate their masters of exploitation. Competition while much touted is to be avoided by capitalists whenever the possibility exists. The advantages of either monopoly (one seller) or oligopoly (few showing interdependence) if you are forced to share a market with another capitalist are readily apparent in the profits the business can make. That is, there are usually higher profits where the competition is eliminated or constrained in some way or other.

This dynamism plays out further in what Schumpeter called creative destruction in Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy. That is where extant capital is replaced with new, more productive units that out-perform the old capital whatever the age of the old capital worn or not. Capitalists are like lions: their predation is inherent. It is not that the capitalist dislikes people nor the lion does dislike his prey, there is no moral imperative of any sort—it is the achievement of profit or the use value of a meal that is of singular importance.

That this capitalist process has so enamored the public for the last 100 or so years may not come as a surprise since the exploitation of the resources leading to some output available to capitalists has been shared i.e. distributed among some of the working population. This is either because of government action or that of union organization—or some political need or fear of retribution viz. food stamps or managed unemployment payments. Malthus (an economist of the early 19th Century) early on argued his criticism of the possibility of capitalists prevailing warned of the consequences of the downside effects of crises in capitalist’s failure to perform: unemployment, crime and revolution. Capitalists are aware of the need to feed the cow if it is to be milked and they do look upon the working classes of needing some attention from time to time. The source of much of the exploitation of the underclass has come from what has been called imperialism or colonialism including much that has characterized the U.S. expansion into the American west. This is the case of American exceptional-ism sometimes called Manifest Destiny. The systematic extirpation of the indigenous population and the exploitation of their land and any other of their holdings that could be turned to account by exploitation was thorough and blatant. Clearly some people had to suffer in the colonial areas abroad exploited by foreign occupation with low pay for workers or forced labor. We are just now facing up to the forcible taking of Mexican lands in the war of 1847. Mexicans are not asking...
for the land back but rather for a place at the table of American exceptionalism.

Another of the down side consequences of corporate power is that with thrusts of the interest of the capitalist in reducing costs is the reduction of the number of workers needed for productive requirements. This results in unemployment which serves the interest of the capitalists as well. With firing, the laying off, making workers redundant through the processes of substituting capital for labor arises when all of the unemployed workers who are now forced to compete with one another for the fewer remaining jobs thereby reduce further the wage rate offered—Marx called this pool of unemployed the Industrial Reserve Army or the Army of the Unemployed. This pool is further enhanced by the loosely guarded borders which facilitate the increasing numbers of workers from Mexico returning to some part of their native lands.

No one likes the conclusion but it seems likely the only way the society can be run is by changing the organization of production for the benefit of the percent who currently do not own and who wish to work. The Republican response is to free the markets—really. What that means is that they wish to give to these same capitalists through the market structure the opportunity to claim by market power whatever is left of any income available to the workers and the public generally—there are no illusions about the efficacy of Christianity with all of the notions of care or charity and consideration with whatever illusions.

I176w

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What is wrong with today's banking system? The past few years have shown that risks in banking can impose significant costs on the economy. Many claim, however, that a safer banking system would require sacrificing lending and economic growth. The Bankers' New Clothes examines this claim and the narratives used by bankers, politicians, and regulators to rationalize the lack of reform, exposing them as invalid.

Admati and Hellwig argue we can have a safer and healthier banking system without sacrificing any of the benefits of the system, and at essentially no cost to society. They show that banks are as fragile as they are not because they must be, but because they want to be—and they get away with it. Whereas this situation benefits bankers, it distorts the economy and exposes the public to unnecessary risks. Weak regulation and ineffective enforcement allowed the buildup of risks that ushered in the financial crisis of 2007-2009. Much can be done to create a better system and prevent crises. Yet the lessons from the crisis have not been learned.

Admati and Hellwig seek to engage the broader public in the debate by cutting through the jargon of banking, clearing the fog of confusion, and presenting the issues in simple and accessible terms. The Bankers' New Clothes calls for ambitious reform and outlines specific and highly beneficial steps that can be taken immediately.

Anat Admati is the George G. C. Parker Professor of Finance and Economics at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. She serves on the FDIC Systemic Resolution Advisory Committee and has contributed to the Financial Times, Bloomberg News, and the New York Times. Martin Hellwig is director at the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods. He was the first chair of the Advisory Scientific Committee of the European Systemic Risk Board and the cowinner of the 2012 Max Planck Research Award for his work on financial regulation.

Review:

"Insightful . . ."--Floyd Norris, New York Times
"Important . . ."--John Cassidy, NewYorker.com

"Crucial . . ."--Jim Surowiecki, NewYorker.com

"Ms. Admati and Mr. Hellwig, top-notch academic financial economists, do understand the complexities of banking, and they helpfully slice through the bankers' self-serving nonsense. Demolishing these fallacies is the central point of The Bankers' New Clothes."--John Cochrane, Wall Street Journal

"Professor and journalist Admati and economic researcher Hellwig argue that it is possible to have a well-balanced banking system without any cost to society; weak regulations and lax enforcement is what caused the buildup of risk unleashed in the crisis. Here, they aim to demystify banking and expand the range of voices in the debate; encouraging people to form opinions and express doubts will ensure a healthier financial system as people understand the issues and influence policy. . . . The authors push for aggressive reform by outlining specific steps that can be taken to change our banking system for the better."--Publishers Weekly

"An important book for readers interested in what has been done, and what remains to be done, when it comes to safeguarding financial institutions."--Kirkus Reviews

"This book's aim, decisively achieved, is to de-mystify the public conversation about banking so we can all understand how threadbare the industry is."--Diane Coyle, Enlightened Economist blog

"This title is a must read for management and human resource professionals within the banking industry as well as government policymakers. With its clear explanations, many examples, and analogies, the book is accessible to readers who do not have business backgrounds and who want to better understand banking."--Library Journal

More reviews

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Rev. *Public Citizen News* (May/June 2013): “offers a simple and accessible explanation of the risks that banking poses and the costs that it extracts from our economy”; explains “how to make the financial system safer and less distorted”; “a must-read.” --Dick

**The New Capitalist Manifesto**: *How to overthrow the industrial age in six steps* by Umair Haque. 2011.

MORE:

http://thenewcapitalistmanifesto.tumblr.com/
Amazon description:
Welcome to the worst decade since the Great Depression. Trillions of dollars of financial assets and shareholder value destroyed; worldwide GDP stalled; new jobs vanishingly scarce. But this isn’t just a severe recession. It’s evidence that our economic institutions are obsolete—a set of ideas inherited from the industrial age that no longer work for business, people, society, or the future.

In The New Capitalist Manifesto, economic strategist Umair Haque argues that business as usual has outgrown the old paradigm of short-term growth, competition at all costs, adversarial strategy, and pushing costs onto future generations. These outworn assumptions are good for creating only “thin” value—gains that are largely illusory and produce diminishing returns every year.

For “thick” value—enduring, meaningful, sustainable advantage that deeply benefits the larger society—Haque details five new cornerstones of prosperity in the twenty-first century:

• Loss advantage: >From value chains to value cycles
• Responsiveness: >From value propositions to value conversations
• Resilience: From strategy to philosophy
• Creativity: From protecting a marketplace to completing a marketplace
• Difference: From goods to betters

The New Capitalist Manifesto makes a passionate, razor-sharp economic case that these methods will produce a more enduring prosperity for business as well as society.

Be the Solution: How Entrepreneurs and Conscious Capitalists Can Solve All the Worlds Problems
Michael Strong (Author), John Mackey (Author)
Publication Date: March 16, 2009

Praise for Be the Solution
"In the past, many believed you either went into 'public service' to do good, or you 'went into business' to make money. Few realized that the long-term success of business depends on serving people, not making money. Few realized that perhaps the best way to serve the public was through free enterprise. Whole Foods Market founder John Mackey, visionary thinker Michael Strong, micro lender Muhammad Yunus, and a few others understand these truths. Be the Solution is the best single book to read to understand the emerging ways in which entrepreneurs can change the world."
—Gary Hoover, serial entrepreneur, founder of Hoover's Business Information Service, Hooversworld.com

"Michael Strong speaks the truth. A must-read for our new American government."
—Sam Wyly, founder, Green Mountain Energy; author of 1,000 Dollars and an
Idea

"This book is totally fantastic. Treat your mind to a feast. Use it to tune your vision towards what really works."
—Charles Harper, Senior Executive VP, Chief Strategist, John Templeton Foundation

"Perhaps more than ever before, young people today are motivated by the desire to make the world a better place. Unfortunately, many have little idea about how to do it, and their educational studies provide them with little direction. In contrast, this book is a road map about how we can get from where we are to where we want to be—to a more peaceful, more prosperous, and more environmentally sound world. Plus, it is exciting, uplifting, and adventurous. Indeed, it provides the recipe for a better world."
—Dr. James Gwartney, coauthor of Economic Freedom of the World: 2007 Annual Report; Gus A. Stavros Eminent Scholar Chair at Florida State University

"This is a very thoughtful and timely book that asks us to look around—and to look within—the amazing opportunities that entrepreneurship offers to the world. I recommend this book to anyone interested in finding solutions to the current crisis."
—Giancarlo Ibarguen, Executive President, Universidad Francisco Marroquin

"At last, a book about the heart of capitalism as a force for creating good in the world for solving many of our tough societal problems. I hope our political leaders read it."
—R. Edward Freeman, Olsson Professor of Business Administration, Academic Director, Business Roundtable Institute for Corporate Ethics, University of Virginia
Beautiful and Abundant: Building the World We Want

by Bryan Welch (Author)

This groundbreaking book cuts through the pessimism and denial that pervade today’s discussions of sustainability and invites readers to visualize a verdant and prosperous future for humanity and all the living things that share our planet. As a practical guide, it offers a process for making our current lifestyles more sustainable and inspires us to look beyond the immediate obstacles to nurture the "destination fixation" that stimulates all humanity's greatest achievements. In the lives and accomplishments of farmers, gardeners, inventors and entrepreneurs, "Beautiful and Abundant" finds a path toward a world vision we can proudly pass on to future generations - a vision that is aesthetically beautiful, economically abundant, ethically fair and irresistibly contagious. Humanity is at a turning point. Only one species in the universe can recognize its own impact on its habitat, so far as we know, and we are that species. In the early years of the 21st Century we face the definitive human challenge - sustaining our quality of life on this miraculous, but finite sphere we call Earth. Tragically, a lot of human energy is being squandered in conflict over short-term environmental obstacles. People debate symptoms and solutions but societies persistently fail to offer positive incentives for change. To harness the full power of human imagination and community initiative we need a positive vision for humanity's future. We need a believable collective vision for the beautiful, abundant planet where our grandchildren will live. What people are saying: "This is a book that invites us all to cut through the negativity of doomsday prophets and other 'progressive' thinkers. ... Bryan Welch is a rare business leader who writes prose that is nuanced, eloquent and visionary. This luminous call to action will inspire you. ... It happened to me." - Wanda Urbanska, author of "The Heart of Simple Living: 7 Paths to a Better Life"
SOLUTIONS

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Leibovich: Grassroots campaign against DC corruption
Freeland and Taibbi: Decrease income gap

GLOBAL:
Hedges: Fight war against capitalism, not radical Islam

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Taibbi, Why Government Doesn’t Fight Wall Street
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Pollin, Full Employment
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Mondiot, Unregulated Capitalism and Climate Change
Williams, Socialism

Here is the link to all OMNI topical newsletters: 
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  Many of these newsletters expose the liabilities of US capitalism (unregulated corporations, large gap between rich and poor, deceptive advertising, endemic boom and bust, and so on).

Contents #11
Taibbi, Lies about Bailout
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Jim Wallis, Serving the Common Good

END CAPITALISM NEWSLETTER #14

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