

## BOOK REVIEW

### **What Money Can't Buy; The Moral Limits of Markets**

Michael J Sandel

Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2012

Reviewed by John Barnes

Michael J Sandel of Harvard University has become very popular of late. He first came onto the international *radar screen* in 2010 with his book *Justice: What's The Right Thing to Do?* Sandel has also become somewhat of a *hit* with young and old alike through his YouTube lectures at Harvard University which are readily available to all.

Sandel's reputation is justly deserved as he tackles the tough moral and ethical issues of our time seeking answers to them using a combination of ancient and modern ethical philosophies ranging from Aristotle's "Virtue Ethics and The Good Life" through Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism "The Greatest Good," and Immanuel Kant's "Duties and Rights, It's the motive that counts," through to a contemporary philosophy John Rawl's "Justice as Fairness". Sandel encourages readers and his students to seek solutions to pressing contemporary ethical dilemmas with clarity.

The current volume follows logically from "Justice: What's The Right Thing to Do?"

Sandel focuses on the pervasiveness of Marketing and Money into areas of our lives where they previously held little or no influence.

The book comprises five fast paced chapters as follows:

- Introduction: Markets and Morals: which covers market triumphalism, Everything for Sale; The Role of Markets, Our Rancorous Politics.
- Chapter 1 - Jumping the Queue: Airports, Amusement Parks, Car Pools, Hired Line Standers, Ticket Scalpers, Concierge Doctors Markets Versus Queues, Yosemite Camp sites, Papal Masses, Springsteen Concerts. Some of these issues have traditional been part of life in Asia but have now become rife in the US.
- Chapter 2 - Incentives: Cash for Sterilization, The Economic Approach to Life, Paying Kids for Good Grades, Bribes to Lose Weight, Selling the Right to Immigrate, A Market in Refugees, Speeding Tickets and Subway Cheats, Tradable Procreation permits, tradable Pollution Permits. Carbon Offsets, Paying to Kill and Endangered Rhino. Ethics and Economics.
- Chapter 3 - How Markets Crowd out Morals: Hired Friends, Bought Apologies and Wedding Toasts, The Case Against Gifts, Auctioning College Admission, Coercion and Corruption, Nuclear Waste Sites, Donation Days and Day Care Pickups, Blood for Sale, Economizing Love.
- Chapter 4 - Markets in Life and Death: Janitors Insurance, Betting on Death, Internet Death Pools, Insurance versus Gambling, The Terrorism Futures, Market, The Lives

of Strangers, Death Bonds. This is a very interesting chapter in that in an earlier life the reviewer worked for a multinational corporation and only found out when he left that the corporation had insured his life with no benefit to him or his dependents- not a very ethical way to treat employees for sure.

- Chapter 5 - Naming Rights: Autographs for Sale, Corporate-Sponsored Home Runs, Luxury Skyboxes, MoneyBall, Bathroom Advertising, Ads in Books, Body Billboards, Branding the Public Square, Branded Life Guards and Nature Trails, Police Cars and Fire Hydrants, Commercials in The Classroom, Ads in Jails, The Skyboxification of Everyday Life,
- Notes, Acknowledgments, Index.

Readers of all ages and vocations will find this book both insightful and stimulating and will provide the reader with a taste of things to come in Thailand and Asia.