

# Capitalism Transforms Human Behavior: Promotes Preoccupation with Pursuit of Financial Self-Interest

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One of the saddest consequences of corporate capitalism is the extent to which it creates a need for people to excessively focus on their financial self-interest and that of their family. Yes, it is important to take care of the financial interests of oneself and one's family, but not so excessively that expressions of our altruistic capacities become greatly down-regulated and sidelined.

In a society that is dominated by capitalistic activity and a capitalistic culture, citizens, by default, must constantly look after their own financial self-interest in order to provide a decent material life for themselves and their family. If parents do not focus on their family's financial self-interest, they may become unable to adequately provide for their children and their own futures. This focus on financial self-interest often becomes obsessive, or at least dominant and preoccupying to an unhealthy extent, and can easily crowd out and sideline altruistic thinking and behavior.

Even citizens who would be enthusiastic participants in an altruistic society (if such a society were available) can easily become consumed with financial self-interest seeking in a capitalistic society, as a pragmatic reaction to the socioeconomic situation that the capitalist culture creates. In that sense, capitalism, particularly corporate capitalism, transforms people. It can transform people who would otherwise be strongly inclined to embrace and participate in altruistic activities and up-regulate expression of their altruistic capacities to, instead, focus on pursuit of financial self-interest. After all, in a capitalist society there is greater need for self-interest seeking than in an altruistic society, and in a capitalist society self-interest seeking is financially rewarded, while altruistic behaviors generally are not.

In a capitalistic economy and culture, financial self-interest seeking is constantly encouraged, often insidiously and subtly, sometimes obscenely. Rather than asking the question, "how can I prepare myself to best contribute to meeting the needs of others?" the dominant question is, "How can I make plans to accumulate an ample amount of wealth for myself and my family?" "What kind of private business can I create or become a part of that will increase my wealth?"

Pursuit of financial well-being becomes a dominant theme in people's lives. For example, home buying, starting with a "starter home" and selling/buying your way up to increasingly larger homes, is an encouraged strategy. You lose if you do not or cannot play that game. The tax

system encourages people to selfishly keep track of potential deductions, so as to reduce taxes owed. People are encouraged to accumulate wealth by buying and selling on the stock market, which, in essence, is a form of gambling. Advertising encourages people to look for the best deal and to “get yours.” Coupons and “promotion codes” encourage people to focus on their financial self-interest. Restaurant workers, who are largely forced to thrive on tips, learn and practice disingenuous behaviors that garner higher tips, while consumers are constantly weighing how generously they do or do not want (or can afford) to tip. Corporations, of course, primarily reward administrators who most contribute to an increase in corporate profits.

In many ways, capitalism is all about pursuit of financial self-interest. Everyone is forced to pursue their individual financial self-interest. It transforms life into one big game of “Monopoly,” which, by the way, has been the dominant childhood board game for many generations.

In contrast, the children’s hospital public economy model (CHPEM),<sup>1-3</sup> when applied to the general economy,<sup>4</sup> creates “vast fields of public activity,”<sup>5</sup> promotes and rewards altruistic behaviors, and minimizes need for financial self-interest seeking. Instead of being consumed by a need to pursue financial self-interest, citizens are able to enjoy participation in an altruistic public economy and are able to enjoy “a most precious freedom”<sup>6</sup> that results from that participation.

By up-regulating expression of the human capacity for self-interest seeking and by down-regulating expression of altruistic capacities, a capitalist society and capitalist economy transforms people into “pursuers of financial self-interest.” In contrast, by up-regulating expression of our capacities for altruism and by down-regulating expression of our capacities for non-altruistic behaviors, the CHPEM transforms people in the direction of altruism and kindness and guides them to disassemble the “Mean Arrangements of Man”<sup>7</sup> and replace them with kind social arrangements that create greater “Social Beauty”<sup>8</sup> for all to enjoy.

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1. The Children’s Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM)
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