

Chapter 6

HYPERCAPITALISM, VALUES, AND WELL-BEING

WOW... THAT WAS A GRIM AND DEPRESSING CHAPTER TO WRITE... 50 PAGES OF BAD NEWS... I HOPE READING IT WASN'T TOO UPSETTING!



ANYWAY, I HOPE YOU'LL HANG IN THERE! REMEMBER, PART II OF THIS BOOK WILL BE MUCH MORE POSITIVE!



BUT FIRST WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ONE MORE THING, WHICH TO ME, AS A PSYCHOLOGIST, IS THE CENTRAL POINT OF THE BOOK: WHAT HYPERCAPITALISM DOES TO VALUES AND PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING.

HYPERCAPITALISM, THROUGH ITS IDEOLOGY AND ITS ADVERTISING, OFFERS A PROMISE. IT ASSURES US THAT UNFETTERED MARKETS AND RELENTLESS BUYING WILL PROMOTE THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS!



NOW WE ASK, IS IT TRUE? DOES HYPERCAPITALISM, DESPITE ITS SHORTCOMINGS, ENHANCE WELL-BEING? OR HAS HYPERCAPITALISM'S PROMISE TURNED OUT TO BE FALSE?

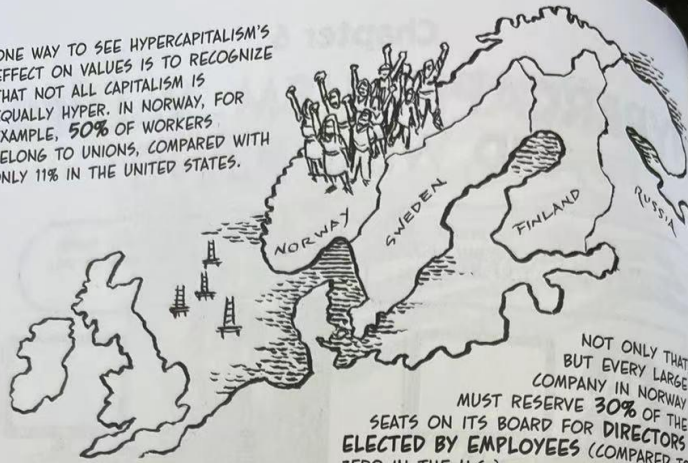


YOU STILL HAVE SOME INK LEFT IN YOUR BOTTLE, LARRY?



SOB!

ONE WAY TO SEE HYPERCAPITALISM'S EFFECT ON VALUES IS TO RECOGNIZE THAT NOT ALL CAPITALISM IS EQUALLY HYPER. IN NORWAY, FOR EXAMPLE, 50% OF WORKERS BELONG TO UNIONS, COMPARED WITH ONLY 11% IN THE UNITED STATES.



NOT ONLY THAT, BUT EVERY LARGE COMPANY IN NORWAY MUST RESERVE 30% OF THE SEATS ON ITS BOARD FOR DIRECTORS ELECTED BY EMPLOYEES (COMPARED TO ZERO IN THE U.S.).

IN 2004, TWO HARVARD POLITICAL SCIENTISTS CREATED A SCORING SYSTEM THAT MEASURES A NATION'S LEVEL OF HYPERCAPITALISM. COUNTRIES WITH LOWER SCORES HAVE GREATER COMPETITION AND LITTLE LABOR INPUT OR STRATEGIC COORDINATION. HIGHER SCORES MEAN HIGHER LEVELS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COORDINATION. LOWER SCORES ARE MORE HYPERCAPITALISTIC.

LET'S CALL THIS NUMBER THE S-SCORE, WITH S STANDING FOR "STRATEGIC." THE LOWER THE SCORE, THE MORE HYPER-CAPITALISTIC THE COUNTRY.

SEE? WE REALLY ARE NUMBER ONE!



S-SCORE	COUNTRY
0	U.S.A.
7	U.K.
13	CANADA
21	NEW ZEALAND
29	IRELAND
36	AUSTRALIA
51	SWITZERLAND
57	SPAIN
66	NETHERLANDS
69	FRANCE
69	SWEDEN
70	DENMARK
72	PORTUGAL
72	FINLAND
74	BELGIUM
74	JAPAN
76	NORWAY
87	ITALY
95	GERMANY
100	AUSTRIA

WE CAN USE THE S-SCORE TO EXPLORE THIS IDEA:

IT MAKES SENSE LAWS ARE THE CHOICES.



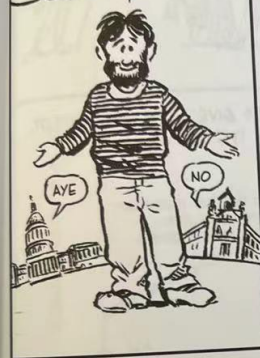
OR SO SCHWAB MODEL ANALYS

WE CAN USE THE S-SCORE TO EXPLORE THIS IDEA:



Differences in ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION are associated with Differences in VALUES.

IT MAKES SENSE! AFTER ALL, LAWS ARE THE RESULT OF CHOICES.



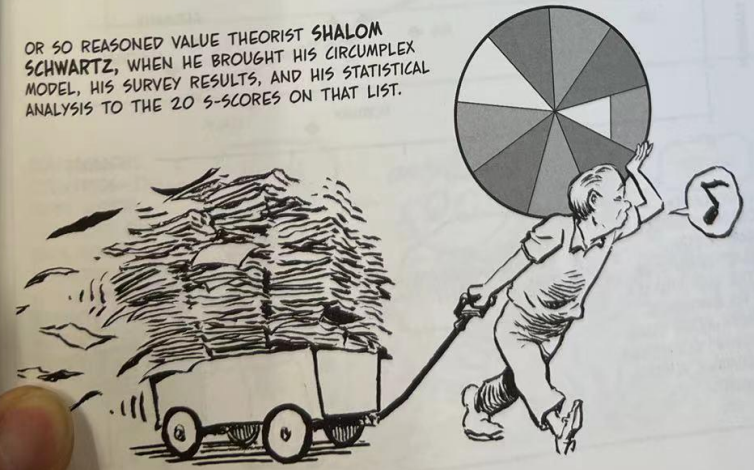
IF A COUNTRY VALUES WORKERS OR THE ENVIRONMENT, WE EXPECT TO SEE PROTECTIVE LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND CUSTOMS IN FORCE THERE.



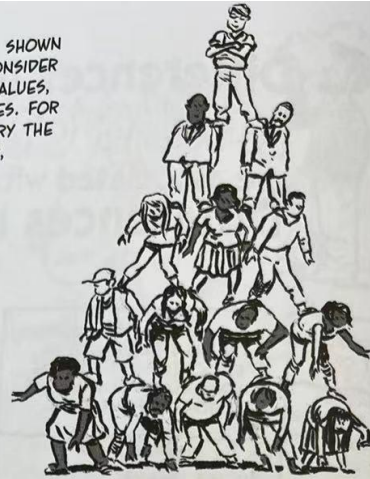
CONVERSELY, A COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC LIFE AFFECTS ITS VALUES. WE EXPECT TO SEE MORE FOCUS ON MONEY AND STATUS IN VERY COMPETITIVE SOCIETIES.



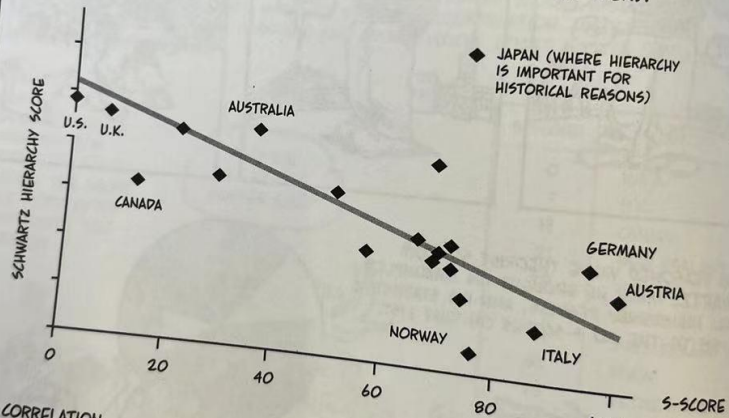
OR SO REASONED VALUE THEORIST SHALOM SCHWARTZ, WHEN HE BROUGHT HIS CIRCUMPLEX MODEL, HIS SURVEY RESULTS, AND HIS STATISTICAL ANALYSIS TO THE 20 S-SCORES ON THAT LIST.



SCHWARTZ'S PAST WORK HAD SHOWN THAT IT MAKES SENSE TO CONSIDER CULTURAL OR NATIONAL VALUES, AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL VALUES. FOR EXAMPLE, WITHIN ANY COUNTRY THE INDIVIDUAL VALUES OF POWER, MONEY, AND STATUS MAY BE COMBINED INTO A SINGLE CULTURAL VALUE SCHWARTZ CALLS HIERARCHY.



GRAPHING COUNTRIES' HIERARCHY SCORES AGAINST THEIR S-SCORES GIVES THIS SCATTERPLOT, TO WHICH WE HAVE ADDED THE BEST-FITTING LINE TO EMPHASIZE THE TREND.



THE CORRELATION, ALTHOUGH IMPERFECT, IS CLEAR. HYPER-CAPITALIST COUNTRIES LIKE THE U.S. AND U.K. TEND TO EMPHASIZE HIERARCHY MORE THAN DO "HIGH-S" COUNTRIES LIKE GERMANY, AUSTRIA, OR NORWAY.

GERMANY, WE'RE MORE HIERARCHICAL THAN GERMANY...

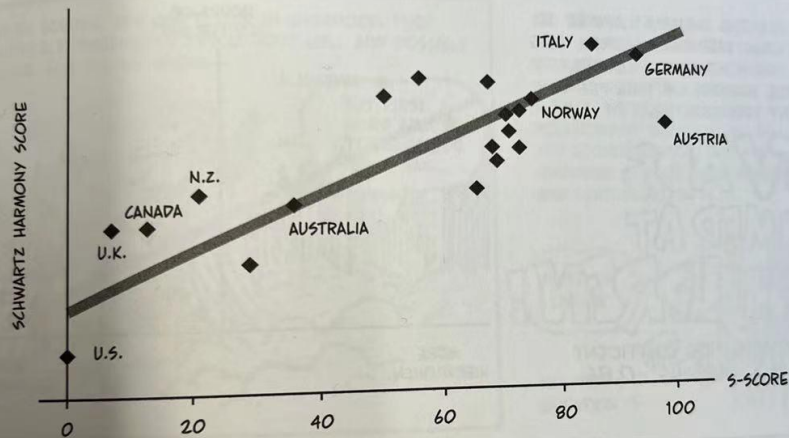


ANOTHER VALUE SCHWARTZ HARM PURSU RELAT NEIGH NATU WORT PEAC ENVI PRES
THIS AGA

ANOTHER CULTURAL VALUE IS ONE SCHWARTZ CALLS HARMONY. HARMONIOUS CULTURES PURSUE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND WITH NATURE. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY SEEK PEACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION.



THIS GRAPH PLOTS THE 20 COUNTRIES' S-SCORES AGAINST THEIR HARMONY LEVELS. AGAIN, THE CORRELATION IS PLAIN.



LOW S-SCORE COUNTRIES—THE MOST HYPER-CAPITALIST ONES—HAVE LOWER HARMONY VALUES. IT'S THE SEESAW EFFECT: THE PURSUIT OF LOOT SUPPRESSES COMPETING VALUES.



A HYPERCAPITALIST ECONOMY PUTS REAL EFFORT INTO DRUMMING MATERIALISTIC VALUES INTO ITS CITIZENS, STARTING IN CHILDHOOD. CONSUMERISM HAS TO BE TAUGHT!

IF ONLY UNBRIDLED GREED CAME NATURALLY TO EVERYONE... SNIFF...

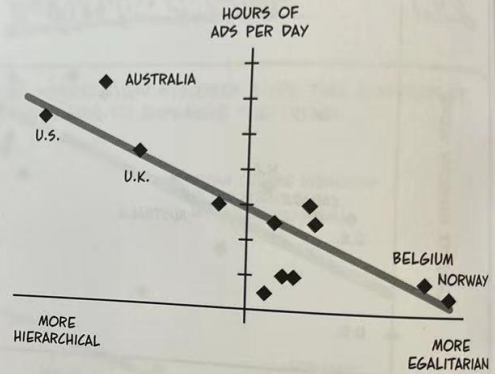
HUSH NOW, YOU'LL STAIN YOUR TIE...



OF ALL THE VARIABLES LINKED TO NATIONAL HIERARCHY SCORES, ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY CORRELATED IS THE AMOUNT OF TIME PER DAY SPENT BROADCASTING

TV ADS AIMED AT CHILDREN!

THE CORRELATION COEFFICIENT HERE IS A WHOPPING **-0.86**.



THAT IS, MORE-EGALITARIAN SOCIETIES BELIEVE IN SHELTERING THEIR CHILDREN FROM COMMERCIAL MANIPULATION, WHICH KIDS ARE ILL-EQUIPPED TO RESIST. (SEE P. 72.)



THE MOST HYPERCAPITALIST COUNTRIES PUT ADVERTISERS' INTERESTS FIRST.



A HOST OF RESEARCH SHOWS THAT COMMERCIAL-SOAKED CHILDREN TEND TO GROW UP INTO ADULTS WITH HIGHLY MATERIALISTIC VALUES. LET'S CALL SUCH PEOPLE "HI-MATS."



HI-MAT PARENTS ARE KNOWN TO GUIDE THEIR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR BY MATERIAL REWARDS MORE OFTEN THAN LOW-MAT PARENTS DO.



YOU ATE ALL YOUR KALE, KYLIE, SO YOU GET A PONY!

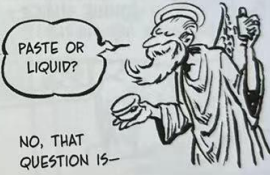
WHAT'LL YOU GIVE ME TOMORROW, MOM?

AND OF COURSE, ADS DON'T STOP IN CHILDHOOD. THEY CONTINUE PUMMELING US THROUGHOUT LIFE, AND POSSIBLY BEYOND, FOR ALL WE KNOW.



BUT FIRST, A WORD ABOUT ETERNAGLOSS WING WAX...

ALL OF WHICH RAISES A QUESTION THAT STANDS AT THE HEART OF THIS BOOK. WE'VE TALKED ABOUT VALUES; WE'VE TALKED ABOUT ECONOMICS; WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VALUES AND ECONOMICS. BUT ONE BIG QUESTION IS STILL UNADDRESSED, AND THAT QUESTION IS...



PASTE OR LIQUID?

NO, THAT QUESTION IS—

WHAT DO THE VALUES PROMOTED BY HYPERCAPITALISM HAVE TO DO WITH WELL-BEING?



OH, YEAH... THAT...

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WELL-BEING? PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE USED THE EXPRESSION IN VARIOUS WAYS OVER THE YEARS.



- *LACK OF MENTAL ILLNESS OR DISORDER
- *EXPERIENCING PLEASURE
- *HAVING A SENSE OF LIFE SATISFACTION
- *HAVING A SENSE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE
- *LIVING IN WAYS THAT DO NOT HURT ONESELF, OTHER PEOPLE, FUTURE GENERATIONS, OR THE BIOSPHERE

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT ALL OF THESE CAN GO TOGETHER! LIVING RESPONSIBLY, SUSTAINABLY, AND WITH PURPOSE IS A SOURCE OF SATISFACTION AND PLEASURE.

MEANWHILE, THE PURSUIT OF EXTRINSIC VALUES CAN LEAD TO ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION. JUST CONSIDER CONNIE SUMER AS SHE VISITS HER THERAPIST!



CONNIE, AS WE KNOW, IS FOCUSED ON MONEY, STATUS, IMAGE, AND POSSESSIONS...

YOU'RE HOW DEEP IN DEBT, CONNIE?



MANY STUDIES HAVE EXAMINED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE VALUES AND WELL-BEING. THE VERDICT: IT'S A NEGATIVE RELATIONSHIP.

I AM GOING TO GET PAID, RIGHT?



FOR EXAMPLE, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT PEOPLE WITH MATERIALISTIC VALUES TEND TO SUFFER FROM

COMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION.



THE MAIN SYMPTOM IS AN OVERWHELMING URGE TO BUY SOMETHING, ANYTHING.

THERE'S A SALE ON! I CAN SMELL IT!



TYPICALLY, A COMPULSIVE CONSUMER IS ADDRESSING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS OR FEELINGS OF EMPTINESS.

SHOPPING GIVES ME THE THRILL OF THE CHASE!



THEY DON'T CALL IT "RETAIL THERAPY" FOR NOTHING!

RUMMAGING THROUGH STUFF GIVES ME FOCUS!



IT OFFERS DISTRACTION, NOVELTY, AND SOMETHING LIKE PURPOSE.

CHECKING OUT GIVES ME SATISFACTION!



BUT THE NOVELTY SOON WEARS OFF.

LEAVING THE STORE GIVES ME A LET-DOWN...



A RECENT STUDY FOUND THAT PEOPLE WHO RATE MATERIALISTIC VALUES HIGHLY (HI-MATS) SPEND MORE THAN OTHERS ON NECESSITIES AND MAKE DISCRETIONARY PURCHASES MORE OFTEN.

GETTING THE BILLS GIVES ME ACID REFLUX...



AS A GROUP, HI-MATS ARE WORSE AT MANAGING MONEY AND MORE PRONE TO TAKE ON DEBT, WHICH OF COURSE FEELS BAD.

LUCKILY, SHOPPING WILL FIX THAT!



ON ANOTHER FRONT, I ANALYZED SOME EXISTING DATA TO LOOK FOR LINKS BETWEEN A NATION'S VALUES FOR MONEY, POWER, AND STATUS AND THE LEVEL OF ITS

CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING.

WE DO ALL WANT CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING, DON'T WE?

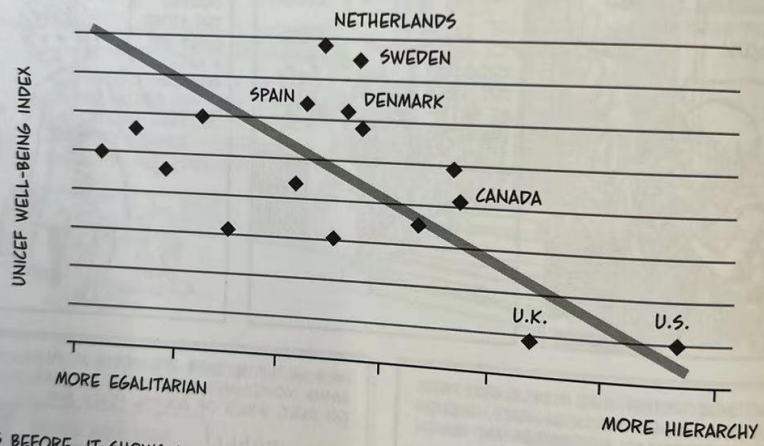
I'M NOT SURE IS THERE PROFIT IN IT?

TIM! YOU LOOK LIKE CAPTAIN HADDOCK!

RANDOM CARTOONIST JOKE



AS A MEASURE OF WELL-BEING, I USED A METRIC DEVELOPED BY UNICEF, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S EMERGENCY FUND. THIS GRAPH SHOWS THE LEVEL OF WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN THE 20 COUNTRIES LISTED ON P. 124, PLOTTED AGAINST HOW MUCH THOSE COUNTRIES PRIORITIZE HEIRARCHY VERSUS EGALITARIAN VALUES.



AS BEFORE, IT SHOWS A SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN HIERARCHY VALUES (MONEY, STATUS, POWER) AND DIMINISHED WELL-BEING. MORE-HIERARCHICAL COUNTRIES, WHERE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY WERE LESS ESTEEMED, HAD LESS HEALTHY CHILDREN ON THE WHOLE.



VALIUM IN THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY IS NO VICE!

I'M NOT SURE IS THAT PROPER IN IT?

THE SACRIFICE OF CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE PURSUIT OF MONEY, POWER, AND STATUS NOT ONLY HURTS THE PERSON PURSUING THOSE VALUES, BUT ALSO HURTS

OTHER PEOPLE

AS WELL.

UNITED NATIONS OF CHILDREN'S COUNTRIES

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT HI-MATS ARE LIKELIER TO BELIEVE IT'S OKAY TO MANIPULATE OTHERS.

SELL YOU A BRIDGE? BUY ME A DRESS?

HI-MATS TEND TO SHOW MORE BIAS AGAINST PEOPLE SEEN AS UNLIKE THEMSELVES.

I DISLIKE EVERYONE, SO AT LEAST I'M NOT PREJUDICED!

HI-MATS MORE READILY BELIEVE THAT SOME GROUPS SHOULD BE SUBORDINATED TO OTHERS.

"Y'KNOW, THE EQUALITY THING HASN'T WORKED OUT, SO MAYBE WE SHOULD FORGET IT..."

*READ ON FACEBOOK

AND IN GENERAL, THEY ARE LIKELIER TO LIE, STEAL, AND CHEAT.

I NEVER LIE!

WHAT I JUST SAID? THAT WAS NO LIE!

NEITHER WAS THAT!

OR THAT.

OR...

HIERARCHY

VALIUM IN THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY IS NO VICE

FINALLY, HI-MATS CARE LESS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. HI-MATS ARE LIKELIER TO SAY THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT. THEY ARE ALSO LESS READY TO MAKE ECO-FRIENDLY LIFESTYLE CHANGES, SUCH AS RECYCLING OR USING EFFICIENT APPLIANCES OR VEHICLES.

LICENSE PLATE SEEN ON S.U.V. IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

NOW, I MUST TELL YOU THAT ANY INDIVIDUAL STUDY HAS SOME CHANCE OF BEING **WRONG**. STATISTICAL DATA ALWAYS HAVE A DEGREE OF RANDOMNESS THAT CAN CREATE THE APPEARANCE OF AN EFFECT WHEN NONE REALLY EXISTS!



SOME COLLEAGUES AND I DECIDED TO TEST THE FINDINGS BY DOING A **META-ANALYSIS**. THIS MEANS POOLING THE RESULTS OF MANY INDIVIDUAL SURVEYS.



POOLING CREATES A VERY LARGE DATA SET, AND A LARGE DATA SET VASTLY IMPROVES OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE TRUTH OF ANY SYSTEMATIC EFFECTS THAT MAY EMERGE.



RESULT: REGARDLESS OF AGE, WEALTH, OR HOMELAND, PEOPLE WHO FAVOR MATERIALISTIC, STATUS-ORIENTED VALUES, ON AVERAGE—



- feel lower life satisfaction;
- suffer more depression and anxiety;
- feel sad more often;
- experience less joy and pleasure;
- smoke and drink more;
- have lower self-esteem.

IN SUM, PEOPLE WITH MORE HUMANE, LESS-MATERIALISTIC VALUES EXPERIENCE HIGHER LEVELS OF WELL-BEING, WHILE THEIR MORE MATERIALISTIC PEERS NOT ONLY FEEL WORSE BUT ALSO ERODE THE WELL-BEING OF OTHER PEOPLE, OTHER SPECIES, AND THE VERY EARTH WE ALL SHARE.

TIME FOR A REVOLUTION OF VALUES, EH, CAPPY BOY?



UH... COUGH... LET ME CHECK WITH MY PEOPLE ABOUT THAT...



INTERLUDE

MY PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW IF THERE'S ANY WAY TO MAKE MONEY FROM THIS REVOLUTION OF VALUES THING...



...IES A VERY
A SET, AND A LARGE
VASTLY IMPROVES
FIDENCE IN THE
ANY SYSTEMATIC
THAT MAY EMERGE.

LESS P IN
THE POOL!

*RANDOM STA-
TISTICS JOKE

d anxiety;
asure;

... COUGH...
ME CHECK
MY PEOPLE
JT THAT...

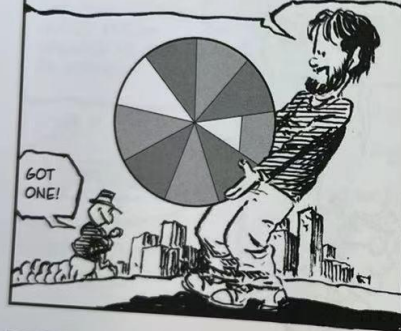
IN PART I OF THIS BOOK, WE TOLD THE STORY OF HOW CAPITALISM BEGAT HYPERCAPITALISM, THE RAPACIOUS SYSTEM THAT NOW HOLDS THE WORLD IN ITS HOT AND HEAVY EMBRACE.



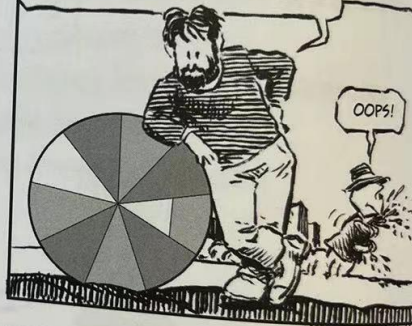
WE EXPLAINED HOW THIS SYSTEM CREATES WEALTH AND POVERTY, REDUCES WORKERS TO ECONOMIC UNITS, CYNICALLY MANIPULATES CONSUMERS, AND BENDS GOVERNMENTS TO ITS WILL—WHEN IT ISN'T SIMPLY IGNORING GOVERNMENT.



WE ALSO DESCRIBED THE THEORY OF VALUES, WHICH SAYS THAT OPPOSING VALUES COMPETE FOR PRIORITY IN PEOPLE'S MINDS.



EXPERIMENTS, SURVEYS, AND REAL-WORLD DATA CONFIRM THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PURSUIT OF MATERIAL GAIN AND VALUES FOCUSED ON PEACE, EMPATHY, AND SUSTAINABILITY.



EXTRINSIC VALUES—FOR STATUS, IMAGE, STUFF, AND MONEY—CAN CROWD OUT INTRINSIC VALUES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH, LOVE, AND HELPING THE WORLD.



WE CONCLUDED THAT THE MONEY-DRIVEN, CONSUMERIST, HYPERCAPITALIST SYSTEM THREATENS OUR WELL-BEING IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.



TEATES
RKERS TO
ES CONSU-
ITS WILL-
ERNMENT.

JUST A
LITTLE
QUEEZE!



DATA
RSUIT
ON

IN THE FOLLOWING
CHAPTERS, WE'LL INTRO-
DUCE YOU TO PEOPLE
WORKING IN MANY
DIFFERENT WAYS TO
CHALLENGE THE VALUES,
BELIEFS, AND BEHAVIORS
OF HYPERCAPITALISM.



SOME OF THESE EFFORTS CONCENTRATE
ON CREATING **ALTERNATIVES**: INDIVIDUAL
AND COLLECTIVE ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT
INTRINSIC VALUES, WELL-BEING, SOCIAL
EQUALITY, AND ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY.



OTHERS INVOLVE ACTS OF **CONFRONTATION**,
CHALLENGE, AND **EXPOSURE**, WHETHER
THROUGH TRADITIONAL POLITICAL MEANS OR
MORE INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES.



IF PART I WAS ABOUT WHAT
HYPERCAPITALISM HAS BEEN
DOING TO YOU, THEN PART II
IS ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO
ABOUT HYPERCAPITALISM!

