

Satz's book on moral limits of marketing should be read

"Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly."

This quote from Vaclav Havel, the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic, succinctly captures the spirit of what Debra Satz is trying to convey on almost every page of her new book, "Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets."

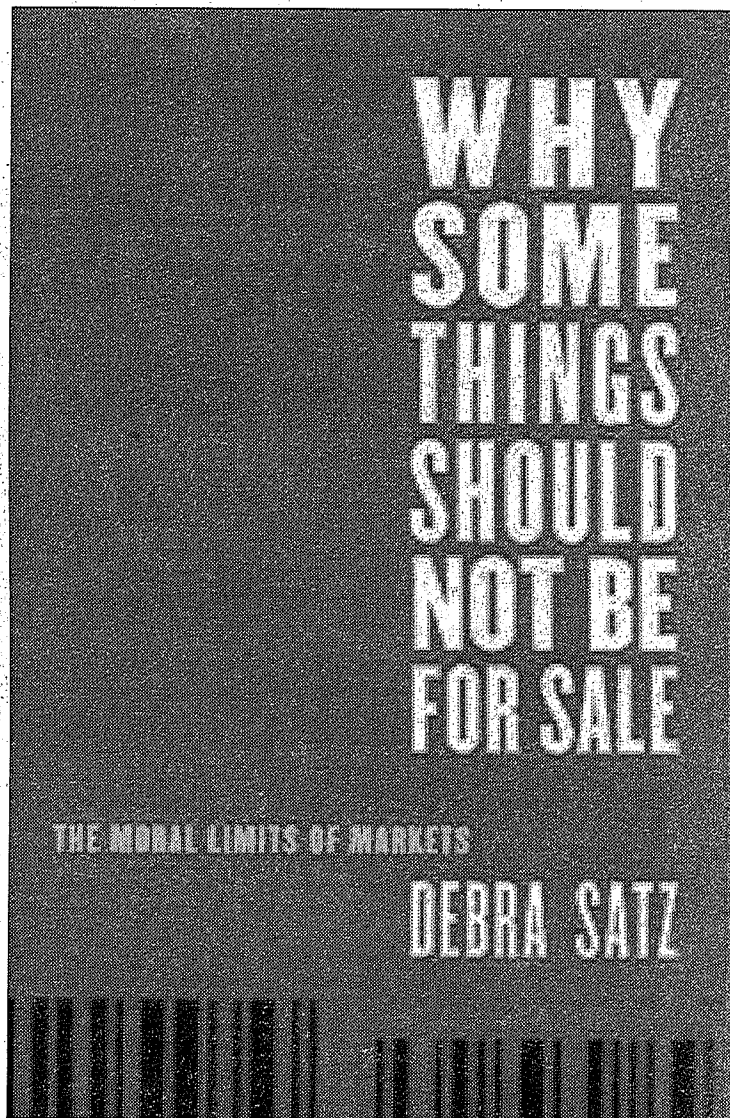
Satz is the Marta Sutton Weeks Professor of Ethics in Society and a professor of philosophy at Stanford University. Her work has appeared in several journals, including "Philosophy and Public Affairs," "The World Bank Economic Review," "The Journal of Philosophy" and "Ethics." She also co-edited, with Rob Reich, "Toward a Humanist Justice: The Political Philosophy of Susan Moller Okin."

Satz had two primary reasons for writing this book: "First, I hope to contribute to current discussions of equality. Among the questions that I consider are the following: In what ways do markets advance social equality? Are restrictions on the market transactions of consenting adults necessarily paternalist? What is the relationship between markets and equal citizenship in a democracy?" The author admits that these questions deal more with the theoretical foundations of the subject matter she attempts to broach in this volume.

Her second motivation for delving into these undeniably murky waters is much more practical: "... to sketch an approach to markets that can be of use in guiding debates not only about the cases specifically discussed in this book but also in other cases, including controversies over the appropriate role of markets in the production and distribution of life-saving drugs, private prisons, education, the buying and selling of subprime mortgages, the regulation of carbon, and political influence." As you can see, Satz is not afraid to explore the more shadowy and less accessible corners of market economics many of us tend to avoid — at least in polite conversation.

At the same time, it is important to remember that Satz does not see herself as offering definitive solutions to the issues she raises. She obviously comes from that school of thought that says it is more important to ask the right questions than to provide the appropriate answers. As Satz states early on in the book, "The perspective I develop here is not intended as a blueprint."

"Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale" consists of 10 chapters arranged in three main sections. The first consists of only one chapter and is titled simply, "What Do Markets Do?" The second part of the book is made up of three chapters in which Satz attempts to explain how contemporary markets contribute to the current state of affairs in the world. Personally, I found the final six chapters, which make up the third section of "Why Some Things Should Not Be for



"Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets" by Debra Satz. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 272 pages; \$17.95 (paperback).

Satz," to be the most provocative and powerful. In retrospect, it becomes obvious why the first four chapters were necessary to set the stage for what was to come later.

If you are easily unnerved, Chapter 9, "Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys," will definitely keep you awake at night — and perhaps it should. "The idea of establishing a kidney market is now attracting unprecedented support among those involved in transplantation, as well as among economists and medical ethicists," Satz observes. "Current black markets in kidneys certainly reflect the different market situations of buyer and seller. Most sellers are extremely poor; most buyers are at least comparatively wealthy." Most of us know someone who has undergone a kidney (or some other vital organ) transplant. As such, it is difficult not to relate to the thesis the author posits on a deeply personal level.

Satz is a masterful author. At first, I was a little put off by her literary style — it is evident from the onset that she is an academic. The precision with which she constructs each sentence, and how she then fuses sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into complete chapters is nothing short of amazing. She routinely breaks complex ideas and concepts into their component parts so that anyone with only a minimal background in economics, philosophy or political science can grasp the significance of what she is saying — which is nothing short of a revolution in how we can under-

stand the world around us.

The book is also one of the more extensively researched I have had occasion to read in recent months, with 25 pages of chapter notes and an 11-page bibliography at the conclusion of the main text. Moreover, Satz is careful to provide a balanced perspective when addressing controversial issues, which encompasses pretty much the entire volume.

Beyond her own bias, which is evident throughout the book, Satz essentially feels the jury is still out when it comes to determining which direction we should take as the market continues to evolve in response to ever-changing realities: "I have been reluctant to endorse blanket prohibitions on markets that have troubling characteristics." Satz concludes near the end of the book, "The moral concerns that I have argued are deeply implicated in assessing when markets are appropriate do not deliver simple answers."

I highly recommend "Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale."

Every so often, a book comes along that has the potential to be a game-changer; i.e., one that needs to be read by a wide audience and discussed openly and extensively by conservatives, liberals, capitalists, socialists, moderates and everyone in between.

This is one of those books.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.