

The Myth of the Greedy Human

Oleh Lafoks



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What This Is About

There is a view of the human being: first and foremost, we are economic creatures. The main driving force is self-interest. Through self-interest people try to explain almost everything: why a person works, how relationships are built, why some succeed and others lose, where power comes from, even morality itself.

The idea of the human being as an economic creature is so widespread that a vast layer of modern

thinking rests on it — from economics textbooks to everyday talk about careers, poverty, and success. In Germany, in the 2024/25 academic year, almost 39% of first-semester students began in the broad field of law, economics, and social sciences; medicine and health sciences accounted for just over 5%.^[1] This is not pure economics: the category is broader. But the scale of the imbalance is clear.

This text is about a myth that makes self-interest look like human nature. And about why that myth is not harmless: it gives moral cover to very concrete practices, practices that make some people richer while others are somehow supposed to be grateful that they are allowed to work at all.

The Myth of the Human Being

Civilizations do not stand only on stone, iron, and electricity. They stand on shared stories that people believe together. Money works as long as people, banks, shops, and states behave as if those signs really have force. The state exists not only as buildings and borders, but as a shared order recognized by officials, courts, police, schools, and millions of ordinary people. A company exists not as a natural object, but as a legal construction that courts, banks, workers, and customers treat as a real participant in the world.

Yuval Noah Harari shows this well: the ability to believe in shared myths allows vast numbers of strangers to cooperate.^[2] A myth here does not necessarily mean a lie. It can mean shared values, rules, and images of the world — everything that gathers people into one reality. But that is exactly why it matters which myth governs us. Some myths help people live together. Others present violence, greed, and the rule of the strong as the natural order.

Our civilization has such a myth about the human being — everywhere, built into language, school, work, and ideas of success. So familiar that almost nobody notices it.

The story usually begins with a textbook picture. One person has a sack of apples, another has a pair of boots. The person with apples needs boots. But the shoemaker does not need apples: he needs grain, salt, or a goat. Exchange breaks down. People suffer through barter until they invent a universal intermediary — money.

In the textbook, this looks like a natural chain. Barter is inconvenient, so people invent money. Money makes exchange easier. Exchange expands into markets. Markets allow wealth to accumulate. Accumulated wealth requires storage, accounting, and loans. So we get banks, credit, interest, stock exchanges, investment, and everything else.

In Adam Smith, this story receives its classic form: the division of labour raises productivity; the division of labour itself arises from what Smith calls the human "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange"; and money appears as a technical solution to the problem of direct exchange.^[3]

At the centre of this scheme, the human being is reduced to one simple model: a person compares options, bargains, and maximizes gain. A small classroom example turns into a story about human nature.

This story is taught in schools. Textbooks repeat it. Free-market ideology is built on it. It is presented not as one hypothesis among others, but as a sober view of things. As realism. Anyone who thinks otherwise is a naive romantic.

The problem is that this is not history, but an ideological construction.

Anthropologist David Graeber calls it the "founding myth of economics".^[4] And he shows that anthropology knows of no actually described society where a "pure barter economy" existed first and money grew out of it. Not one. The scheme — barter, then money, then credit — has been repeated by textbooks for three hundred years.

So how is human life actually arranged?

Ask a colleague for a phone charger and they will probably just give it to you. They are unlikely to invoice you for usage. A neighbour holds the door when your hands are full of boxes. A friend picks you up from the station at night when the last bus is gone. In family, friendship, and teams, much of life rests not on calculation, but on a simple "you help when help is needed."

Graeber calls this "baseline communism": if people do not regard each other as enemies, they usually help when they see a need and can help. But human reciprocity does not stop at small favours. People sit through the night by a hospital bed. They pull strangers out of a fire. They shield children with their own bodies.

This is not sentimentality. It is the foundation that makes shared life possible at all. Without it there is no family, no neighbourhood, no team, no society.

Free-market ideology rests on a different model. Yes, we really do live in a world where resources are limited. But in this model scarcity becomes not a shared problem that people solve together, but a justification for constant struggle over resources. The human being competes with others and is always choosing how to get more, give less, win position, and hold an advantage. Here ruthlessness easily turns into a virtue, and profit into proof of being right.

Why does the myth hold? Not because it is true. Because it is useful. It supports a picture of the world in which the market looks like the natural state of the human being, and everything else looks like deviation, weakness, or naivety.

And here the myth stops being a harmless mistake.

If human beings seek advantage "by nature", then greed is no longer a vice but a norm. Help without calculation becomes stupidity. Pressure on the weak is not cruelty but "competition". A system that rewards predators looks not sick, but "natural" and "rational".

In ordinary human morality, a person who does nothing but takes the collective result for himself looks like a parasite. In market logic, a similar trick gets a very different name: an efficient business model. Arrange things so that others work more, receive less, and the difference settles with you — and now it is not shame, but success.

That is how the myth of human nature gives moral cover to very concrete practices. This is not cruelty — this is the market. Not exploitation — incentives. Not war, even economic war — competition. Not greed — just how people are.

Even Business Does Not Believe the Myth

The story is easy to extend by one more step. If the market brings together many producers and buyers, then competition supposedly forces everyone to work better, cheaper, and more efficiently. Bad solutions lose, good ones spread. From private attempts to gain advantage, general progress somehow emerges.

In the textbook version, this is usually tied to the "invisible hand" of the market: nobody deliberately cares for the common good, but the market puts everything in order by itself. Magic, just with graphs.

But if we take this seriously, a strange question appears: why is even the most market-driven economy not one continuous market?

If the market really is a universal mechanism of coordination, then the firm should be not a plan and not a hierarchy, but an internal market: every task becomes a separate transaction, every participant an independent seller of his service, every decision an object of bargaining.

But the real firm is arranged the other way around: it removes most of the work from the market.

A factory allocates shifts, materials, and machine time through a plan. A hospital allocates doctors, beds, operating rooms, and duties through schedules and protocols. An IT team does not open a tender for every bug: it plans a release, sets priorities, and divides responsibility. A studio does not assemble an album through bidding between musicians and the sound engineer: it has sessions, roles, deadlines, and a shared sound.

Not because people inside the firm stop seeking advantage. Because the market, as a coordination mechanism, is too expensive and too slow for that kind of work.

Coase was pointing precisely at this boundary. The market is not free as a procedure: to organize work through it, someone has to define the transaction, price, responsibility, quality control, and way to settle disputes again and again. For a one-off purchase, that may be fine. For continuous joint work, it becomes an extra layer of friction.^[5]

These are transaction costs: the price of turning work itself into a deal. A firm does not abolish the market altogether. It switches it off inside a defined zone. Where repeated work, complex dependencies, and a common result are needed, roles, wages, plans, schedules, responsibility, and managerial decisions replace endless bargaining.

This does not abolish competition between firms. But it shows that even business does not trust the market where complex work is needed. Inside, it replaces competition with coordination: a common goal, a plan, roles, trust, standards, and responsibility.

Even capitalism, when it needs to make something complex, creates islands of planning inside the ocean of the market.

Competition Against the Human Being

Fine. Competition can sometimes be useful as a limited tool: compare solutions, choose the better

project, keep a system from rusting completely. In that form, it can work.

The problem begins when a tool is declared a morality.

In a game, the loser leaves the field. In life, he remains a human being: with a body, children, debts, illness, fear, old age. But competitive logic loves pretending that all of life is a fair tournament. If you lost, you failed. If you fell behind, you are ballast. If you are poor, you played badly.

Humanism offers different values. A person is valuable not because he won. Not because he is efficient. Not because he is useful to the market. He is valuable before the ranking, before the salary, before the result.

In humanist morality, strength creates obligation. If you are stronger, richer, smarter, more experienced — that is a reason to limit yourself and help those who are weaker.

In competitive morality, strength turns into a right. The winner does not have to explain himself: his victory already counts as proof. The weak are not helped — they are used as evidence that the system works.

And here competition becomes not just a method of selection. It becomes a machine of moral justification. It does not only throw the weak out. It also explains why it is their own fault.

And people call this meat grinder the foundation of civilization? Seriously?

The Market Rests on What Is Not Market

But even competition does not exist in a vacuum.

For a market to work at all, it needs a layer of things that cannot be reduced to self-interest: trust, law, courts, common standards, a ban on direct violence, the habit of keeping one's word, punishment for fraud.

Without this, the market does not become free. It becomes the rule of the strong.

A contract without a court becomes a piece of paper. Advertising without responsibility quickly turns into manipulation and fraud. An employer with no boundaries uses another person's need as a tool of pressure. A monopolist with no limits quickly starts writing the rules for himself.

So the market exists only because around it there is a non-market shell: morality, law, trust, language, upbringing, cooperation. Everything that cannot be reduced to a price.

And here the central hypocrisy begins. Free-market ideology speaks as if self-interest explains everything by itself. But it lives off things it directly contradicts. It uses them like air — and at the same time corrodes them, because all of it obstructs the pure logic of gain.

It is like a person who spends hours proving that friendship does not exist, then asks friends to help with the move.

The Winner Wants to Close the Game

Competition has another built-in trap.

The winner of the competitive race does not dream of an eternal fair race. He wants the race to end. He wants the advantage to become not temporary, but permanent. He wants the rules to start working for him.

Victory in competition is always a movement toward monopoly. Or toward duopoly, if monopoly has not worked out yet. A business following its own logic does not want to spend its whole life running beside equal rivals. It wants to buy the rival, squeeze the rival out, close the gate for newcomers, capture the access channel to the customer, register a patent, lobby a convenient rule, turn a temporary advantage into permanent rent.

Apologists for the free market demand freedom for the market. But this freedom is not needed so that everyone remains free. It is needed by the winner in order to take freedom away from the rest: impose his terms, cut off access to the customer, turn equal opportunity into a nice sign on a door behind which nobody has been expected for a long time.

The cult of competition praises struggle, but rewards the one who manages to end it in his own favour.

What a strange cult: everyone must compete until someone becomes strong enough to cancel the competition.

The Mathematics of Advantage

And it is not only about the winner's personal greed. Concentration is pushed forward by the mechanics of the game itself: accumulation, probability, and a reserve of strength.

Imagine a fair game. Two people toss a coin. Heads or tails. The stake is 1 coin. One has 100 coins in his pocket, the other has 2.

The rules are the same. The probability is the same. Nobody cheats.

But the one with 100 can survive a long run of losses and still remain in the game. The one with 2 is out after two unlucky tosses.

Formally, the game is fair. In reality, it is not. The poor player has about a 2% chance of taking everything. The rich player has about a 98% chance. A reserve for mistakes is already an advantage.^[6]

This is the mathematics of concentration: an early advantage feeds itself. The larger your reserve, the longer you can wait, make mistakes, dump prices, apply pressure, survive crises, and buy other people's defeats.

And real business does not even aim for perfectly fair rules. It aims to turn a win into the ability to keep winning: close the entrance, buy the infrastructure, occupy the access channel, crush with price, lobby a convenient rule.

Even without cheating, the system rolls toward concentration. With cheating, it flies.

And then advantage starts changing the meaning of the work itself. The stronger the player, the more he can spend not on making a better thing, but on holding the position: advertising, lawyers, patents, lobbying, exclusives, pressure on suppliers, control over platforms and channels of access to the customer. This too is part of competitive struggle. Only now it no longer looks like a contest of quality, but like a war to make sure others never even reach the starting line.

So competition promises the selection of the best, but again and again produces something else: concentration, defensive walls, and a senseless waste of energy on the struggle itself.

Free Software as a Counterargument

After the discussion of concentration, it is especially interesting to look at a place where the logic of appropriation broke down.

In technology, the myth of the greedy human being meets one of its most uncomfortable counterexamples. Not in a pretty theory about nice people, but in the most material part of the modern world: servers, phones, routers, clouds, databases, development tools, and countless devices that work because someone, somewhere, wrote free software.

If someone has spent his whole life on Windows, Linux may look like a strange system for admins, geeks, nerds, and people who for some reason love terminals. But Linux is not just a desktop picture.

Android is built around the Linux kernel.^[7] Google calls Android the world's most popular operating system: more than 3 billion active devices in 190+ countries.^[8] On 15 May 2026, W3Techs saw Linux on 61.4% of websites with a known server operating system.^[9]

Servers, clouds, routers, TVs, NAS boxes, Android car stereos, coffee machines, and guitar gadgets — a huge part of the digital world runs on software the ordinary user never even sees.

And here we must not confuse things. Free software is not simply "gratis". In the Free Software Foundation's formula, the point is not price but freedom: the user is free to run, study, modify, and share the program.^[10] The idea is simple: software should be closer to mathematics than to merchandise. The Pythagorean theorem is an achievement and an inheritance of all humanity. It can be used in school, on a building site, in a commercial project, in a spacecraft, or in a song, if you really want. Nobody can buy it, lock it up, and forbid everyone else to use it without a licence.

The GPL takes the next step: it protects the commons from appropriation. It is not a licence that says "take this for free, then turn it into private property." If you distribute a modified GPL program, you must pass on the same freedoms.

A person who releases a program under the GPL signs up to something almost insane by market standards: my work may be taken, studied, changed, and used; but nobody should be able to turn it into closed private property and strip everyone else of the same rights.

Even the author cannot later take back an already released version from the people: they received the right to use that version under the GPL, and that right cannot be withdrawn.^[11]

That is a radical thought. People can put years of work into a system of staggering complexity and say in advance: this will not become my little kingdom. This will belong to all people on Earth equally. You can work as an engineer around it, get paid, consult, support, assemble systems, and earn money through honest work. But you cannot appropriate the commons and collect rent merely for the right to use it. You cannot forbid people to pass it on. You cannot forbid its use in commercial or non-commercial tasks.

Linux stands on exactly this principle. It is like the Pythagorean theorem: it belongs to everyone, and nobody can make it his closed property. It was not created by Google, Microsoft, or Amazon. It was not built by one corporation as a product with a licence fee for every installation. The Linux kernel is distributed under GPL-2.0.^[12] In other words, the commons cannot simply be taken out of the common world and turned into a closed private asset.

And Linux is not a lonely kernel for specialists. Around it grew a whole continent of free software. Debian 13 "trixie", one of the major Linux distributions, contains 69,830 packages and more than 1.46 billion lines of code.^[13]

This is the internet, office work, graphics, music, video, education, science, programming, databases, servers, security, typography, languages, accessibility, games, documentation, and tools for engineers, artists, scientists, musicians, and ordinary users.

Microsoft Windows, with its Notepad and Paint, looks next to this cultural mass not like the centre of digital civilization, but like a small closed bundle of programs from one vendor.

In the early 2000s, this did not look like a friendly ecosystem with corporate sponsors. Linux was the ideological enemy of the closed software world.

In leaked internal Microsoft documents known as the Halloween Documents, Linux and open source were discussed as a serious threat to Windows and Microsoft's server business.^[14] In 2001, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer called Linux "a cancer" in the sense of intellectual property.^[15] In 2007, Microsoft claimed that Linux and other free software violated 235 of its patents.^[16]

And then Linux won. Not in the sense that everyone has Linux on the desktop. In the more important sense: it became the foundation layer of the internet, phones, clouds, and endless pieces of hardware — and with that it shattered the idea that serious systems can be born only inside closed corporations. The losers simply still advertise their logos louder.

Once it became clear that this foundation could no longer be demolished, the corporations changed their tune. Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and the rest did not create Linux. They joined the winner. First free software was called a threat, then it won, then billion-dollar businesses were built on top of it.

This was not a sudden enlightenment of billionaires. It was an ideological defeat. The closed model lost not because corporations became kinder. It lost because people do not want to live in a world where knowledge is locked up, where devices are forbidden to be understood and changed, and every improvement must wait for the owner's permission.

Of course, parasites quickly found loopholes. You can formally keep the kernel open while building a closed cloud, store, account, subscription, API, format, ecosystem, and access rules around it. You can obey the letter of the licence and violate its spirit: take the commons, put a cash register,

control, and dependency on top, and then explain that this is what innovation means.

Yes, you understood that correctly: the monsters of modern IT stand on a foundation that is free for them, built for decades by geeks, hippies, anarchists, academics, idealists, and stubborn engineers. They made things that can be used as much as you want, wherever you want, for whatever you want. Without asking permission. Without begging for access. Without proving to an owner that you are a profitable enough user.

SQLite is a quieter example of the same logic: the most widely deployed database on Earth. Not Excel, which not everyone uses. Not a big corporate system with salespeople, presentations, and licences. A small, reliable, embedded SQLite, used by almost everyone — most often without even knowing it.

SQLite is in every Android device, every iPhone and iOS device, every Mac, every Windows 10/11 installation, in Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Skype, iTunes, Dropbox, TVs, automobile multimedia systems, and countless applications.^[17] The project itself states that the code is in the public domain and free for any use, commercial or private.^[18]

If you love Apple, one of the most closed systems in the world, under the hood even there it is not all Apple's own work. Apple called the kernel and base parts of OS X, today's macOS, Darwin. Apple itself wrote that Darwin is open source technology based on BSD, Mach 3.0, and Apple technologies.^[19]

This does not mean that macOS is simply FreeBSD. It means something else: even the glossiest closed product stands on layers of free software, Unix/BSD culture, and shared engineering work. Someone else's shared foundation is taken directly as code or ideas, wrapped in Apple licences, and sold under the bitten-apple logo.

That is why the difference between "you may take it" and the GPL matters so much. One thing is to let a corporation take the commons, polish it, lock it up, and put a cash register at the entrance. Another is to say: take it, but do not appropriate it. Improve it, but do not deprive the next people of the same freedom.

Free software shows the exact opposite of what the market myth tells us. To create systems of colossal complexity and importance, you do not necessarily need greed, monopoly, a patent club, and a cash register at the entrance. People build such things not for rent on every copy: out of curiosity, craft, irritation at bad tools, the desire to solve their own problem — and very often out of the desire to do something good for others.

Not because the market forced them. Not because they were promised rent on every copy. Because people really do tend to understand, share, teach, improve, build shared things, and leave behind something that works.

And the market comes later. When there is already something to package, close, sell, and call innovation.

Do Not Wait for Permission

After free software, this may look like a small example. In fact, it is the same nerve, only in culture.

Millions of people around the world write songs, form bands, make recordings, play shows, release albums, rehearse in basements, rooms, garages, studios, schools, kitchens, and headphones in the middle of the night. Not because it is a rational career plan.

Every independent musician knows the arithmetic. Almost nobody will make a living from music. Almost nobody will become a big band. Almost nobody will reach the upper tier where there is real money, a team, promo, tours, festivals, playlists, and a real production budget.

Even when the industry boasts about the success of streaming, the numbers are cold. In 2024, Spotify had about 12 million people who uploaded music; only 2.3% generated more than \$1,000 in payouts on the platform, and less than one percent crossed the \$5,000 threshold.^[20]

And that is not the musician's profit. It is platform payout before the split with the label, distributor, publisher, bandmates, producers, debts, and taxes. And before the costs of recording, videos, ads, targeting, PR, artwork, instruments, rehearsal, and travel.

At the top tier of the industry, money flows to the three majors — Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group — to platforms, catalogue owners, and the small number of acts that take most of the attention in each niche.^[21]

Money goes to money: it is easier to get into playlists and recommendations when something has already been pushed by budget, connections, and a promotion machine. The rest know the rules of the game in advance. And still they play.

This matters. Independent music exists not because musicians are bad at counting. Usually they count very well: what the rehearsal room costs, what recording costs, what travel costs, what mastering costs, what artwork costs, how many people came, what remains after rent, fuel, and the broken cable.

And still they write.

Not as beggars waiting for the industry to issue them a pass. Not as people who "have to" do it for free until they are allowed near the cash register. But as people who are proud to make music outside the logic of commodity exchange. For us, music is not a commodity, and the industry is not the arbiter of meaning.

Because music does not begin with the market. It begins earlier: with the desire to express what cannot be expressed otherwise. With the need to turn anger, love, fear, shame, tenderness, loneliness, memory, and noise into form. With the desire to tell others: I feel this too; you are not alone; this is what it sounds like.

People make music to leave a trace. To preserve the face of an era. To record what usually gets erased. To gather their people. To give people a place where, for at least an hour, they stop being consumers, employees, functions, and lines in a report.

Some make music out of professional pride: because a good riff, the right sound, a strong line, and an honest chorus matter in themselves. Some out of stubbornness. Some out of love for the stage. Some because silence is worse. Some because they really want to make the world better, even with one song, one show, one person in the room.

Punk did not invent this logic, but it named it out loud: DIY, Do It Yourself. Do not wait for permission.

Do not wait until a label decides you are worthy. Do not wait until an algorithm decides you are convenient enough for a playlist. Do not wait until someone with a budget explains that your song does not fit the segment. Write. Play. Record. Call people. Help others do the same.

But the word "yourself" is deceptive here. DIY almost never means "alone". In practice, it is a network of mutual aid.

One person draws the poster. Another lends microphones. A third knows how to mix. Someone lets the band sleep on the floor. Someone shoots video. Someone writes a post. Someone brings an extension cord. Someone fixes a cable ten minutes before the show. Someone collects money at the door to cover rent and petrol. Not to build an empire. So the show can happen at all.

This is not an economy of maximum self-interest. It is the logic of shared work: making sure the thing appears in the world.

There is money there. Of course there is. You have to pay for the room, fuel, strings, recording, domain, printing, instruments, sound, transport, and time. But money is not the supreme meaning. It serves the thing; it does not replace it. And that is something to be proud of.

We know this not from books. Darwin's Cat was not born out of a business strategy either. Nobody assembled us as a product for a market segment. Nobody made a financial model to decide whether a song would pay for itself. We make music because we cannot not make it. It is good, and we want you to hear it.

If the human being seeks only advantage by nature, independent music should not exist at all. Not as a startup temporarily burning cash for a future market.

But exactly like this: with the understanding that the market will probably never become the point of this work. That a song does not have to become an asset. That a show does not have to be a line in a business plan.

That behind a song there are months of work: lyrics, music, arrangements, parts, demos, searching for a sound, rehearsals, recording, mixing, artwork, the website, the first live performances.

And all this may be heard by a hundred people. Or ten. Or one. But if one person truly heard it — did not scroll past, did not leave it as background, did not become a retention metric, but heard it — then it was already worth it.

Millions of people keep making music not because they do not know reality, but because they know something more important about the human being. A person needs not only to receive. A person needs to express, share, testify, argue, console, rage, love, find their people, and leave behind a sound in which someone else recognizes themselves.

And if all of this does not fit the model of a profit-extraction machine, the problem is not with music.

The problem is with the model.

Back to the Myth

Now we can see where the myth is hidden.

The myth is not that people never seek advantage. They do. People can be greedy, cowardly, petty, cruel. You do not need economic theory for that.

The myth begins where these qualities stop being called by their names. Where greed is declared nature. Where egoism is called rationality. Where exploitation is called efficiency. Where another person's weakness becomes an opportunity. Where care is treated as naivety, and the war of all against all as the normal state of the world.

Here is the trick: the ugliest human qualities are not merely acknowledged as existing. They are made respectable. They are given a suit, a diploma, a chart, a business term, and a moral justification.

At the limit, this grows into the familiar obscenity of social Darwinism: if someone is weaker, poorer, or pushed out, then he is to blame and should get out of the way.

But we have just seen something else.

Even business, when it needs to make something complex, moves inside the firm and replaces the market with coordination. Competition, if left without limits, does not move toward eternal freedom but toward monopoly.

Free software shows that people are capable of creating a shared foundation for the world and protecting it from appropriation. Independent music lives not as a product line, but as a way to speak, play, share, and be heard.

These are not small exceptions. They are huge pieces of reality.

This is the central substitution. It is not the market system that shapes a certain type of behaviour; instead, the human being is supposedly a market creature by nature. It is not the system that rewards the predator; the predator supposedly fits reality better. It is not the rules of the game that push toward the accumulation of power; the winner supposedly just won honestly.

That is exactly why the myth is useful. It takes responsibility away from the structure of the world and puts it onto the human being.

If you were pushed out, then you are "weaker". If someone captured common access, then he is "more efficient". If freedom ended for everyone except the winner, then that is how "nature" works. If someone does something outside the market, then he is "naive", "stupid", or simply has not yet understood how to monetize it.

But this is a lie.

A human being is not a profit-extraction machine. The human being is more complicated. He can be greedy. He can be cruel. He can betray, bargain, pressure, take. But he can also understand, share, teach, help, build shared things, make music outside the market, write free software, and give years of life to things that promise no profit.

We live in myths. This is not an insult. It is the human way of gathering the world into meaning. We have a brain that can not only count calories, risks, and money, but also create stories about what matters, what is allowed, what is shameful, what is beautiful, and what is worth living for.

The old myth was probably not designed around a table as a conspiracy. It grew out of trade, empires, bookkeeping, textbooks, and winners who explained their victory as the natural order. Then it began to reinforce itself: the more society rewarded self-interest, the more plausible it sounded that the human being is nothing but self-interest.

But if myths gather the world, they cannot be left to drift. We do not have to live inside a story that became strong by accident and now justifies the worst in human beings. We are thinking creatures. We can choose which stories to repeat, which values to pass on, which images of the human being to stitch into school, work, culture, technology, and music.

So the question is not whether to live with myths or without them. Without them, we cannot. The question is which myths will govern our lives.

We do not have to accept a myth that justifies greed, exploitation, cynicism, and the rule of the strong as the "natural order". We can create other myths. More honest. More human. Myths in which strength does not give the right to crush, but creates an obligation to help. In which the commons is not treated as nobody's property until the winner steals it. In which a human being is valuable not because he won, but because he is human.

We know about the problem. We are thinking about it. And we will solve it. Not quickly, not cleanly, not without mistakes. But we will solve it — because humanity has reinvented itself many times when the old stories became too tight.

Darwin's Cat creates myths too. Small ones, loud ones, imperfect ones. Maybe this is a microscopic piece of the next, more human myth. A myth in which the human being finally stops justifying the worst in himself and begins to build the world around the best.

So it shall be.

Oi!

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[2] Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, chapter 2, "The Tree of Knowledge": <https://www.ynharari.com/topic/power-and-imagination/>

[3] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chapters I-IV.

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