



The Penguin and the Leviathan: The Triumph of Cooperation Over Self-Interest

Yochai Benkler

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What do Wikipedia, Zip Car's business model, Barack Obama's presidential campaign, and a small group of lobster fishermen have in common? They all show the power and promise of human cooperation in transforming our businesses, our government, and our society at large. Because today, when the costs of collaborating are lower than ever before, there are no limits to what we can achieve by working together.

For centuries, we as a society have operated according to a very unflattering view of human nature: that, humans are universally and inherently selfish creatures. As a result, our most deeply entrenched social structures - our top-down business models, our punitive legal systems, our market-based approaches to everything from education reform to environmental regulation - have been built on the premise that humans are driven only by self interest, programmed to respond only to the invisible hand of the free markets or the iron fist of a controlling government.

In the last decade, however, this fallacy has finally begun to unravel, as hundreds of studies conducted across dozens of cultures have found that most people will act far more cooperatively than previously believed. Here, Harvard University Professor Yochai Benkler draws on cutting-edge findings from neuroscience, economics, sociology, evolutionary biology, political science, and a wealth of real world examples to debunk this long-held myth and reveal how we can harness the power of human cooperation to improve business processes, design smarter technology, reform our economic systems, maximize volunteer contributions to science, reduce crime, improve the efficacy of civic movements, and more.

For example, he describes how:

- By building on countless voluntary contributions, open-source software communities have developed some of the most important infrastructure on which the World Wide Web runs
- Experiments with pay-as-you-wish pricing in the music industry reveal that fans will voluntarily pay far more for their favorite music than economic models would ever predict
- Many self-regulating communities, from the lobster fishermen of Maine to farmers in Spain, live within self-regulating systems for sharing and allocating communal resources
- Despite recent setbacks, Toyota's collaborative shop-floor, supply chain, and management structure contributed to its meteoric rise above its American counterparts for over a quarter century.
- Police precincts across the nation have managed to reduce crime in tough neighborhoods through collaborative, trust-based, community partnerships.

A must-read for anyone who wants to understand the dynamics of cooperation in 21st century life, *The Penguin and the Leviathan* not only challenges so many of the ways in which we live and work, it forces us to rethink our entire view of human nature.

The Penguin and the Leviathan: The Triumph of Cooperation Over Self-Interest

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From Reader Review The Penguin and the Leviathan: The Triumph of Cooperation Over Self-Interest for online ebook

David Dinaburg says

The title acts as a Rorschach test of sorts: while I recognized the allusion to Hobbes' regulatory leviathan, the titular "Penguin" left me mystified. CompSci wonks, at least the ones I know, recognized Tux, the Linux mascot, but assumed the leviathan referred to Microsoft. Before the first page, the breadth of upcoming data that will be comfortably dissected and relayed is artfully signaled.

The book, with its overarching narrative bolstered by particular examples, felt like an academic article by way of One Thousand and One Nights. It moved quickly, and I was always looking forward to hearing the next tale of experimental trials on social games or perceived fairness, of critical examinations of regulatory systems based solely on human self-interest, or of cooperative systems embedded within nature. I have excerpted my favorite snippet-- if you enjoy this, you'll enjoy the whole thing:

"Let's call this the fable of the Badger and the Coyote. In the National Elk Refuge, in Wyoming, a group of scientists observed that badgers and coyotes were collaborating to hunt ground squirrels. Coyotes, who are faster and have a larger range, would scout for squirrels, and once they spotted one, would signal to the badgers. The badgers, who are underground hunters and catch their prey by trapping them in dead-end tunnels, would then know where to burrow and lie in wait. The ground squirrels were now caught between a hammer and an anvil."

Jeong Heum Kim says

Compact and comprehensive on cooperation

It is a great book about cooperation. It collect all the relevant knowledge from various fields about cooperation. It is a good summary of the knowledges, and good starting ppint to study cooperation.

Jeremy says

This is a good an important book. Benkler's first(?) book, "The Wealth of Networks", was too dense to be accessible, and "The Penguin and the Leviathan" is much better in that regard.

Benkler's key claim is that people are motivated much more by non-monetary influences than we thought. We have always known that people aren't fully self-serving, but we treated homo econimicus as a close enough approximation to reality. Benkler claims that systems and organizations that reject this premise not only provide a better environment for those involved, but can produce better things.

He gives the examples of Google giving employees a huge amount of autonomy, or the creation of Wikipedia, Linux, etc. In every case, people are motivated by much more than just money.

Unfortunately, I found the book a little bit jumbled - there wasn't a clear narrative structure or direction. That

being said, this is still definitely worth reading.

Edmund says

This book's thrust is that people are motivated by more than just financial reward, and that a system designed to take advantage of such intrinsic motivations as cooperation, social recognition and reputation, autonomy and so forth, may in fact provide a superior system design model. He does not declare we use one over the other, but that both can be used if done carefully. Careful design is important because it's possible to "crowd out" the social and cooperative strategies from an individual's motivational reward system by providing financial rewards.

Yochai Benkler is a primary source for such "digital and network" intellectuals as Christopher Anderson, Don Tapscott, Peter Diamandis and others. He is an academic and his writings reflect that, which is why I did not give five stars. But I still recommend you read this if you're interested in why cooperative efforts such as Wikipedia, Linux OS, Apache web server, and many more, are so successful. If you're interested in how to recreate such a cooperative environment to accomplish something, then this is a source that will parse out the whys and hows of human motivation, especially in the digital networked future.

Nicholas says

Benkler writes a very detailed and example rich argument against the rational-actor theory. Counter to the idea that humans will always act in their short-term best interest, Benkler provides a wealth of examples from evolutionary biology, psychology, anthropology, and computer science to show how other motivations often surpass self-interest in guiding our decision making.

Notes on finishing the book:

This is a timely and important book. Benkler presents a unceasingly rational argument for cooperation and sharing. This argument is a counter-balance to the cries of "Socialist!" coming from the political right, but Benkler avoids that framing of the issue and sticks to research-based arguments against the point of view that asserts humans *only* act in short-term self interest, so our systems should be designed to reflect that.

Benkler presents a much broader view of human motivation and makes a compelling and sound argument that most humans pursue cooperation some of the time and many humans pursue cooperation most of the time, so designing social systems that take these motivations into account help us build, not just more cooperative, but more efficient and more productive systems.

The combination of timely argument and meticulously sourced evidence makes this a very important book.

John says

This is a very provocative book that tries to find a scientific basis for cooperation in individuals and society. He takes issue with views of society from Adam Smith to interpretations of "The Selfish Gene" that assume that self interest is the primary evolutionary determinant in society. This is a fascinating review of the popular and academic use of these ideas. He believes legal, economic, political and social decisions that are

made using this mistaken view has led to unworkable solutions like three-strike laws and self-regulating markets, that have not succeeded in solving the problems that they set out to solve. He believes that the science really shows that society is not based on self-interest but cooperation. From examples in evolutionary biology to economics. The move away from simple models of self-interest to more complex models that show that cooperation has more explanatory value than old models. Social networks are really changing the way cooperation can work in the world.

This is a very important book to read if only to make you think about these issues and the 'self-evident' assumptions upon which society have been operating. Its is a great alternative to the fetishizing of social Darwinism and Anne Rand that has been so prevalent for years. Alan Greenspan being one of the great examples that he gives of the way this fetishizing has had really affected some of our most important decision makers in society.

Duncan McLaren says

This is an extremely well written and easy to read book - which I stress because reading some of Benkler's earlier work was like wading through treacle. It covers all the main scientific debates about cooperation as a social, cultural and evolutionary process, leaving the reader optimistic, but with no misconceptions about the challenges we face to release our innate potential for collaboration. His conclusions will - no doubt - be dismissed by vested interests and their apologists in political circles, but this book should read by anyone with a genuine interest in the future of humanity.

Martti says

Talk is not cheap. It affects us daily.

Communicating the values of the community. Share the trust.

There is no one definition of fair.

The details of a norm are irrelevant, what's important that everyone follows and knows them. Driving on the left is not better than driving on the right.

Music distribution site magnatune let's people choose how much to pay. From 8 to 18. The descriptions vary on every 2\$. 8 is typical, 10 better than average, 12 is generous, 18 is we love you. People are not forced, but can see the categories, so they can decide if they feel generous or awesome or typical. Send clear signals of what the norms of the system are.

People are not selfish always. The dictator test shows that people can be selfless at a cost to themselves if the price isn't too high.

Different tests. The public good VS trust game. Punishment works best in public good game, because we know it's not directed to us personally, but to the bad actors. In a trust game it backfires, because people take it personally. The lack of trust. If the trusted says to the investor, you should invest x or I will not triple your money - that seems kind of a personal threat.

In public good games people also act differently over countries, being more cooperative in countries where rule of law is effective and fair. People trust the state. Also with punishment.

Corporations are beginning to see that money is not everything and not the only motivator.

Case study : Toyota Numi factory in US. Happier and effective workers. Norms like customer service, more freedom to employees, teamwork. Rotating jobs, more training. Continuous improvement, kaizen, suggestions by every worker.

GM before treated workers as machines: timed them, managers constantly looming over workers and micromanaging exactly how to move.

Case study : Open source software and Linux. IBM support for OSS and services around Linux.

Case study: music industry punishing potential customers and starting with an assumption everyone's a criminal.

Case study : Obama campaign

Make high contributors (20%) feel valued and welcome, but you can also get effective work out of low contributors (80%) by small chunks, because low from large amount is still a lot. Let people contribute as much as they want.

Christopher Mitchell says

A very good and quick read that explores how people act in more complicated ways than are normally assumed by economists and also policy-makers. Systems have to take into account the ways different people will cooperate or act more in self-interest (though these can often overlap) when designing rules and incentives for action.

Phoenix says

Good Examples, So So Execution

The book's thesis is that the historical pattern of our society of swinging between the extremes of Hobbe's "rule of law" Leviathan and Adam Smith's laissez fair The Invisible Hand of economic maximization doesn't work in the long term. Appealing to the open source model used in the computer industry he uses the Linux symbol of Tux the Penguin to advocate for a third way, that of encouraging social mechanisms in the market that allow favour cooperation over coercion and control.

Much of the illustrative material involves simulations including the well known "Prisoners Dilemma" where participants are give a choice of either cooperating or selling out for different levels of reward, and variations on the "Community Game" where participants are given a sum of money and a set of rules for keeping and distributing money in order to test the level of their generosity. What researchers found was that the framing of the activity had a great deal to do with the outcome. Individuals who either met with or were

shown pictures and given backgrounds to the other person or persons in their group had greater empathy and were more likely to share than less. Similarly when an individual was told that they could be punished (monetarily) for not sharing, but were assured that under no circumstances would that occur, the tendency was to share more than in situations where this was not made clear. Reframing the "Community Game" as the "Wall Street Game" encouraged a more selfish mode of behaviour.

Benqler also invokes anecdotes from real world behaviour, citing the skunk works emergence of Zongshen Motorcycles out of a group of parts suppliers who cooperatively banded together in economic self defence against government run production facilities and GM's highly productive NUMMI plant in California, handed over to Toyota to manage using kaizan principles. Anti-smoking campaigns framed as the danger of second hand smoke appealed to our altruistic side and worked better than those that weighed in on the personal risk. Wikipedia, Facebook and other Web 2.0 media are based on our willingness to share and all for social not monetary benefits. And the success of Barack Obama's 2008 election campaign was largely based on empowering the grass roots organizations to contribute, innovate and share.

According to the author research across the board shows that 70% of the population are willing to share to some degree and 30% will tend towards selfishness and this appears to be a constant over time and different cultures. Benqler argues that properly structured incentivism and volunteerism can co-exist. One of the findings is that the biggest aid to helpful behaviour is the lowering the cost of sharing. The other is establishing a community of practice where the contributors feel valued and not exploited.

On the downside the book lacks footnotes or a bibliography for referencing the original material on which the studies are based, so I'm not entirely convinced of the conclusions, esp the constancy of the 70/30 rule. Secondly, altruistic behaviour is nothing new - in fact it's the norm within families and many social groups. Benqler is also weak regarding arguments for contrary points of view. He pits the penguin against the extremes of Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith, which I agree are unhealthy, however I'd argue that Tux merely represents a third extreme, albeit it's one that I like and as an advocate for quality improvement and learning organizations one that I've tried to encourage. A vibrant society is one that keeps changing its POV.

Lastly I'm disappointed that the author missed the seminal and well cited work *The Evolution of Cooperation* (1984). IMV Axelrod's research would be extremely supportive of Benqler's conclusion with the exception that Axelrod found that a purely cooperative approach is highly vulnerable to groups who favour a strategy of selfishness, and a policy of trust but verify is indicated. In the long run the strategy of "Tit for Tat" or "Tit for 2 Tats" appears to be more effective than pure cooperation. I would add, nor are the motives of non-selfish individuals necessarily for the good - China has used social media to publish images of protestors asking that they be identified anonymously on the web - essentially crowd-sourcing surveillance.

As a long term advocate for improving product quality I've always believed in encouraging, partnerships, assisting others and information sharing between departments, supply chains, customers and even in certain areas with competitors - pure competition is rare IMHO and one can always find common interests if one looks for them. People need to feel appreciated, but also obligated out of a sense of what's right to volunteer to fill where needed independent of external rewards, so I did enjoy the book. Overall it's a quick read (the typesetting is double spaced) and the examples are good fodder for motivating groups, in the workplace, the schoolroom and in society at large.

Murali Neelakantan says

I have been lucky to have been surrounded by people who love reading. My maternal grandfather would always be seen reading- it often did not matter to him that he was reading the same newspaper more than once in the day or that it was an old paper that he found many days or weeks after it was published and used as wrapping by the local grocer. It took me many years to understand that he derived more meaning every time he read the same text and my favourite books are always close to me so that I can read them often. I am reminded of an old sanskrit saying that we take the character of the people around us just like bamboo smells like sandalwood when it grows in a sandalwood forest.

As with many of the books I have been reading recently, a very dear friend gifted me this book by Yochai Benkler. Although I have been truant in reading it as quickly as I may have liked, I don't have any regrets at all. It was a very strange and fortunate coincidence that I attended the Global Congress on IP & Public Interest while I was reading the book and a lot of what I heard there brought to life the themes in this book - cooperation rather than competition and sharing rather than monopolistic ownership will be features of the path to future progress.

Prof Benkler finds authority to suggest that even evolution is a result of cooperation and the "survival of the fittest" is not always as a result of the elimination of everything else. His premise that Cooperation takes many forms but at its heart is the realisation that humans are driven by a need to do good which finds resonance in my reading of Atul Gawande's Being Mortal and a deep but complex sense of equality and fairness which I associated with Michael Sandel's What Money Can't Buy. As coincidences go this was also the time when the city of Madras was flooded due to record breaking rainfall compounded by unfettered and unplanned growth, a clear sign of human selfishness being punished by nature. In what may seem as a contradiction, it was also during this man made calamity that ordinary people exhibited and witnessed humanity and cooperation that was unprecedented in both extent and form.

The various real world examples of cooperation trumping competition that Prof Benkler quotes, from the Spanish farmers, Wikipedia, lobster gangs or even the acceptance of open source by IBM make compelling cases for a new business model which negates the idea of just one winner and many losers whose fate is death. Perhaps we will be able to establish an alternative paradigm and platform for R&D in the pharmaceutical sector which continues to thrive on a model of private ownership of "research" and an opaque reward system for innovation that hurts public health.

It has been my belief that the pharmaceutical industry is changing to be more like the technology industry - with a clear segmentation of various aspects of the business: small, focused, nimble, innovative teams outside the traditional pharma giants leading discovery and innovation, and manufacturing experts in places like India leading the production, leaving traditional bigpharma to be the ever shrinking slice of meat in a world that is moving to a healthier and more environmentally friendly vegan sandwich. With rapid technological innovation in drug discovery, sharing and collaborative clinical trials which are also using advanced computer modelling to be both cheaper and more successful than ever before, and constantly innovative manufacturers, the current role of big pharma in "commercialisation" of a drug seems to be threatened. Unless they find a way to cooperate with the innovators and manufacturers like IBM did to open source software, theirs may well be the fate of the now extinct book stores or the encyclopedia britannica.

If Prof Benkler's prediction of this trend of cooperation is accurate, as more and more of us accept and adopt the sharing ecosystem and reject a "rewards&punishment" economy, we will be unwilling to allow extortionate profits from excessive drug prices, human rights will trump monopolistic ownership of

knowledge.

Many of us who have worked in "performance based" organisations with "merit based" compensation ought to read this book so that those myths can be busted. One may criticise the book as being too simplistic and lacking real academic depth since it relies more on the works of others than of the author but that is unfair - it is very hard to explain a future paradigm in a manner that everyone understands and that is perhaps the best feature of this book. It should be essential reading for teachers and parents so that they can prepare kids for the different future from what they had anticipated, and even for kids so that they can mould their own character for this new world, where we are more likely to be happy.

Book says

The Penguin and the Leviathan by Yochai Benkler

"The Penguin and the Leviathan" it's the interesting book about the dynamics of cooperation and working in collaboration in the 21st Century. The main thesis of this book is to debunk the notion of a selfish human nature and how this knowledge can better serve our societies. Israeli-American author and professor of Law, Yochai Benkler, uses the latest in multiple converging scientific fields and a variety of examples to illustrate the power of cooperation. This 272-page is composed of the following ten chapters: 1. The Penguin vs. the Leviathan, 2. Nature vs. Culture, 3. Stubborn Children, New York City Doormen and Why Obesity Is Contagious: Psychological and Social Influences on Cooperation, 4. I/You, Us/Them: Empathy and Group Identity in Human Cooperation, 5. Why Don't We Sit Down and Talk About It?, 6. Equal Halves: Fairness in Cooperation, 7. What's Right Is Right -- or at Least Normal: Morals and Norms in Cooperation, 8. For Love or Money: Rewards, Punishments, and Motivation, 9. The Business of Cooperation and 10. How to Raise a Penguin.

Positives:

1. The very interesting and practical topic of cooperation applied to many facets of the human experience.
2. The author's positive outlook is refreshing and his personality comes through in the narrative.
3. Despite making use of the latest in various scientific fields the book is very accessible.
4. The author does a wonderful job of describing the Leviathan approach to society and why there are better methods now.
5. The strongest strength of this book is the many practical examples of cooperation in the many endeavors of the human experience. Excellent examples that clearly show the advantages of a more progressive approach to cooperation in business, government and society as a whole.
6. The shift from an authoritarian to a more humane and collaborative approach.
7. The science behind our innate predisposition to cooperate. Good use of neuroscience and biology (evolution). "In practically, no human society examined under controlled conditions have the majority of people consistently behaved selfishly". Good stuff.
8. Debunks the myth of self-interest. A look at why the myth persisted.
9. Collaboration in the animal kingdom.
10. Social influences on cooperation. What fosters cooperation. Fascinating studies.
11. Neuroscience and the biological foundations for empathy.
12. Communication, communication, communication. Mediation as a model of conflict resolution.
13. The importance of fairness in cooperation in economics, politics and social psychology.
14. The importance of morals and standards in establishing norms that lead to cooperation. Many great examples.

15. Debunking the notion that self-interest is the main driver behind our behavior. Very interesting and thought provoking.
16. The most important factors in determining compliance.
17. The success of free and open-source software. An interesting discussion.
18. Three major factors why executive compensation fails in enhancing company performance.
19. The business of cooperation is an interesting chapter that covers high-performance organizations that thrive on cooperation. Even military applications. The music industry.
20. The future of cooperation. Benkler provides a list of levers to be the key ingredients of successful, practical and cooperative systems.

Negatives:

1. Overall, the book is stuck on one theme: cooperation versus self-interest which is not necessarily bad but the transition between sub topics is executed poorly.
2. I would have liked to have seen the author support his arguments against stronger opposing views instead of less practical extreme views of Thomas Hobbes.
3. I think a better title would serve this book better. Ironically, the author provides examples on how framing certain studies have a direct impact on the results. The author's lack of name recognition can't overcome the book's vague title. How many more books would have been sold with a better cover and title?
4. Some of the game theory will throw some readers off.
5. The author shows how open-source software works but never once mentions Apple that takes an opposing view.
6. A misspell here and there, commonweal instead of commonwealth. Nitpicky...
7. No bibliography, notes or source material.

In summary, I enjoyed reading this book. As an engineer and manager, I have been trained in the archaic robotic Just-In-Time(JIT)and other similar top-down approaches to the now more flexible and cooperative styles, so the book's many practical examples resonated with me. Benkler succeeds in driving home his main thesis of cooperation over self interest by providing many interesting examples throughout the book. The lack of source material and references hurts those of us who would like to pursue some of the topics in more depth. That being said, Benkler provides a very useful and positive outlook on how to improve societies via a cooperative approach that does not necessarily disregard elements of self interest. If you want to learn more about the power of cooperation, this is a recommended book.

Further suggestions: "Good Strategy Bad Strategy" by Richard P. Rumelt, "What Money Can't Buy" by Michael J. Sandel, "Human" by Michael S. Gazzaniga, "50 Popular Beliefs that People Think Are True" by Guy P. Harrison, "Lying" by Sam Harris, "The Better Angel of Our Nature" and "The Blank Slate" by Steven Pinker, "The Compass of Pleasure" David J. Linden, "Hardwired Behavior" by Laurence Tancredi and "Mistakes Were Made" by Carol Tavris.

Danu Poyner says

Yochai Benkler's brief and approachable book takes issue with the founding premises of many of our institutions that humans are in general not to be trusted and that we need strong authority and incentives to keep us in line lest we run amok. He seeks to show us that our basic nature, though far from perfect, is far more cooperative and altruistic than is commonly thought.

Benkler makes his case using a range of detailed examples, many of which will be familiar to readers of other work of this nature. In fact, *The Penguin and the Leviathan* can be regarded as something of a synthesis of Michael Sandel's 'What Money Can't Buy', Jonathan Haidt's 'The Righteous Mind' and Barry Schwartz and Kenneth Sharpe's 'Practical Wisdom.' In my opinion these are all better books in their own right, but the value of Benkler's offering is that it puts together many of their disparate insights in a sustained and focused way. That this book is coming from a business/economics/technology background in itself makes this a worthwhile and encouraging contribution.

Benkler seems alive too to the darker side of cooperative behaviour, though this is not sufficiently developed in my view. Overall though, *The Penguin and the Leviathan* provides a measured, accessible and persuasive take on the age-old problem of how to design organisational systems that bring out the best in humanity. It's a great, up-to-date starting place for anyone with an interest in this question.

Christoph says

Since the early 1980s, there has been an aggressive attempt to frame cultural tradition towards the neoliberal ethic of self-interest and greed in the late stage of capitalist triumph. Similarly, the Go-Go generation has been remembered as such a time, turning hippies into yuppies, but then, as the notion goes, a rejection of this perspective occurred in Generation X and this is true as it pertains to popular culture. But in elite circles the culture of "I built it" and all that comes with it has become ingrained and intensified on through the dot com era, up to today's economic meltdown. Comparing these traditions, mass culture has produced a number of niches and subcultures which have prospered outside the rubric of capitalist ethic and control. Meanwhile, the debase elitist culture has suffered from numerous reformations, internal divisions and has culminated in the current crisis culture to the point of near collapse.

So in *The Penguin and the Leviathan*, Yochai Benkler has attempted to characterize both sides of these perspectives using these concrete if not somewhat esoteric examples. On one side is the side of cooperation, mutual assistance, and non-hierarchical forms of action producing some end goal; it is exemplified by the emblem of free and open source software (FOSS), the penguin. On the other side is the traditional form of self-interest, laissez-faire neoliberalism, and cultural Darwinism (a pseudo-form of the theory, at that); this is exemplified by the most emblematic form of the origins of the tradition, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Moving beyond the signifiers for these antithetical world-views, Benkler lays out in practice how cooperative organizations from free enterprise to anarchical groups resolve conflicts, establish norms, and ensure progress within their own missions. He then supports these practical examples with numerous psychological and sociological studies establishing theory for why these groups succeed. Through this process Benkler makes the case that there is nothing unique about human nature or culture which produces these institutions or their results. He makes no claims to special insights into mass human nature unlike the wealth of cultural Darwinists, quite the opposite. He merely claims then uses numerous examples to show that when humans are placed in scenarios where group norms are established to promote cooperation, fairness (which is a very complex issue he explores across several chapters), and respect, an equitable culture emerges where all parties are allowed to participate with a sense of dignity and pride.

Benkler has produced a clear and positive description of human interpersonal relations that defies the negative and nihilistic narratives. From detractors ranging from Morozov to Berman to Žižek, this perspective although common in academic circles might seem almost alien to individuals who are culturally informed from media reports on crime and human behavior. But this kind of narrative is not the shocking lead story kind of sell, it is the quiet acknowledgment of the world that continues in the face of forces that

thrive on failure and discouragement of the masses.

Roy Kenagy says

Blurb: <http://bit.ly/oMXBXg>

For centuries, we as a society have operated according to a very unflattering view of human nature: that, humans are universally and inherently selfish creatures. As a result, our most deeply entrenched social structures – our top-down business models, our punitive legal systems, our market-based approaches to everything from education reform to environmental regulation - have been built on the premise that humans are driven only by self interest, programmed to respond only to the invisible hand of the free markets or the iron fist of a controlling government.

In the last decade, however, this fallacy has finally begun to unravel, as hundreds of studies conducted across dozens of cultures have found that most people will act far more cooperatively than previously believed. Here, Harvard University Professor Yochai Benkler draws on cutting-edge findings from neuroscience, economics, sociology, evolutionary biology, political science, and a wealth of real world examples to debunk this long-held myth and reveal how we can harness the power of human cooperation to improve business processes, design smarter technology, reform our economic systems, maximize volunteer contributions to science, reduce crime, improve the efficacy of civic movements, and more.
