

Doing Business Without Capitalism: Decision Frameworks and Moral Effect

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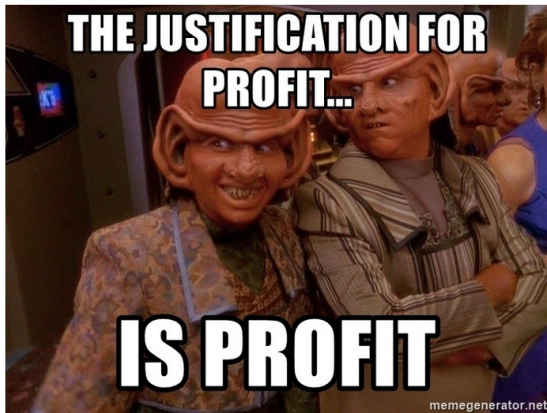
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Plan of the talk

- Capitalist business
 - ▶ Decision-making frameworks
 - ▶ Secondary effects
- Non-capitalist business
 - ▶ Decision-making frameworks
 - ▶ Secondary effects
- A case study
- Conclusion

Capitalist business

A truism: The business of business is *profit*.



A capitalist decision-making framework

When the success of a business is defined by the profits it makes, this provides the business-maker/-manager/-owner with a straightforward template for decision-making:

Decisions should be made on the basis of
their potential for maximising profit.

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Profit **for whom??** Stockholder/Stakeholder/Social contract. . .

Case study: Doing business with capitalism

Big Publishing Companies:

- Q: What should we publish?

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- Q: What should we publish?
- A: What will maximize our profits?

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Big Publishing Companies:

- Q: What should we publish?
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Decision making is easy.

Secondary effects

Profit-motivated decisions also have non-profit consequences:

- social effects (such as what types of customers or consumers are favored);
- environmental effects (such as how costly to the environment the business is to run);
- aesthetic effects (such as the quality and beauty of the product created);
- moral effects (such as harms done to individuals or groups of people).

But these effects are all *secondary* effects, in the capitalist framework.

Non-capitalist business

What if profit maximisation is *not* the goal?

Non-capitalist business

What if profit maximisation is *not* the goal?

We need an alternative to “maximise profit.”

Alternative decision-making frameworks (1)

- What are the alternatives?
- What are the secondary effects of these frameworks?

Alternative decision-making frameworks (2)

- Even if the frameworks are morally neutral, the implementation won't be.
- Hence, the choice of framework is itself a moral choice.
- The decision can be made by looking at the secondary effects.

Case study: Doing business without capitalism

Ellipsis Imprints

<https://www.ellipsisimprints.com/>

- Small press based in Durham, England.
- Founded spring 2020.
- Publishing (1) books written by and for children; (2) science fiction and fantasy; (3) poetry collections and other anthologies; (4) popular nonfiction.
- Fourteen books published between 2020 and 2023.
- Six more books forthcoming in 2024 and 2025.

A Thought Experiment

If money were of no concern, what sort of books you want to publish?

What we want to publish

- Books that amplify voices that are traditionally shut out of publishing (minority voices, BPOC voices, queer voices).
- Books that I want to read even if no one else wants.
- Books that support and encourage writers.
- Books that provide people with new ways of thinking about things.
- Books that make me happy.
- Books that make knowledge available.
- Books that reflect the lived experiences of a diverse set of people.

How we want to publish them

- Books that look and feel like “real books”—higher standard than self-publishing. Not just high-quality editing, but high-quality formatting and typesetting.
- Books that are a pleasure to hold and to read.
- Books that are affordable. Our ebooks are all under £3.00 and we aim to keep our print books under £15.00 (most are under £10.00).

How does it work?

- We have no salaried employees.
- We set sale prices and contract terms so that the majority of royalties go to the authors.
- The bulk of the work—reading submissions, providing editorial feedback, typesetting, cover design, arranging review copies and blurbs, setting books up for distribution, producing ebooks, marketing, advertising, running social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Discord)—is done by me.
- Our poetry editor is a volunteer.
- When we need to commission covers or cover art, we always pay, but we can't pay much.

Thank you and...

Questions?

Wanna buy books? I have some with me...

