onur uğur

a few words on a few things

theorems, business, martial arts and other many things

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Onur Uğur

Onur Uğur was born in Ankara in 1984. As the child of a civil servant family, he lived in various cities—Ankara, Rize, Istanbul, Hatay, Adana, back to Ankara, then again Adana, and finally, by the time this book was published, once more in Ankara. Interestingly, he still manages to live in Ankara. Relocation, for him, has always been something of a passion.

He earned his undergraduate degree in Business Administration (English) from Çukurova University and completed his graduate studies in Management and Strategy at the Faculty of Political Science (Mülkiye) at Ankara University. In 2005, he discovered Aikido, marking his entry into the world of martial arts. While actively training in Aikido and Wing Tsun, he also explored other martial arts, studying their cultural, social, and historical development.

He delivers interdisciplinary talks on the similarities between business life and martial arts, and his writings have been published on various platforms. Having worked since the age of thirteen, Uğur has held positions in family businesses, private enterprises, and international corporations. At the time of the first edition of this book, he was serving as a manager in an international company. At the time you're reading this edition, he is a managing partner at Pavones Psychology Training and Consulting, and he provides corporate training and consultancy services through Qmark Consulting Inc.

Alongside his ongoing podcast *"Birer Nexus Alır Mıyız?!"* he has produced other well-received shows in different styles, including *Kellerin Savaşı*, *Aliterasyon'la Her Şeyin Bir Şeyi Var*, and *Küçük Resim*. He

has also taken part in projects on executive coaching, parenting, leadership, and mentoring, and has contributed to NGOs, associations, and organizations as a founder, strategic developer, and trainer. Through his e-newsletter *Tetris'teki Uzun Çubuk* (*The Long Piece in Tetris*), he shares timely insights with his readers.

A motorcycle enthusiast and self-confessed adrenaline addict, the author is married with a daughter. The first edition mentioned he also had a male cat—but don't worry, the cat is fine, happily living with his mother-in-law.

He continues to teach Aikido at Torii Dojo—his home dojo—and remains deeply curious, constantly researching the things that capture his interest and sharing what he learns.

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Gamze Bayram

Gamze Bayram was born in Afyon, Turkey, in 1992. She graduated from Hacettepe University with a degree in English Language and Literature. Since her student years she has gained experience in medical, technical, academic, and commercial translation and editing. Following this, she pursued her true passion: literary translation. She has translated four books, including this one. And she is going to do this as long as she loves translation.

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contents

contents

Special Preface for the Translation

Just so you know, what you're about to read isn't in the original version of this book. It only exists in the translated editions, written just for you.

I've been writing since the moment I learned to hold a pen as a kid. I scribbled on the backs of notebooks, in the margins of books I was reading, in all those gift planners people gave me. I wrote nonstop. But I was so shy and insecure that I never wanted anyone to see my words. I just kept writing—and then usually destroyed it all, terrified someone might actually find and read it. Looking back, I'd give my all to dig up those old scraps now.

Eventually, I grew up. My successes and failures shaped me, and I finally came to believe I could share what I wrote. Every time I read a book I loved, the thought nagged at me: *"I could do this too."* And when it finally clicked that life is really about the beauty you create and the cruelty you avoid, this book started to come to life. It found its readers in Turkey, and now, for the first time, it's being shared with the world in English.

There are two people I owe special thanks to in this translation journey. First, my dear friend Emre Aydın, whose grit and perseverance I've always admired. His love for writing and comedy is contagious. I was lucky enough to watch his stand-up show—proof that smart writing can turn into unstoppable laughter. He's also the one who pointed me toward the next person I want to thank □

That's Gamze Bayram. She didn't just translate my words—she cared for it like it was her own book. Hon-

estly, I'm not sure I treated my writing with as much devotion as she treated the translation. With her footnotes, she managed to capture both the cultural boundaries and the voice of the book in such a beautiful way. Through our endless conversations and her endless energy, she's become not just the translator of my future books, but also a wonderful sister to me. To both of you—thank you for the effort, and for walking this road with me.

From the little kid who once hid away her words, convinced they weren't worth reading, to you—whoever and wherever you are in the world, holding this book right now—my warmest greetings. Thank you.

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Preface

From the hunter-gatherer days to agricultural societies, farming to industry, and then into the information age—we've been marching steadily from community life toward individualism, one step at a time. Along this long journey, humanity has witnessed monotony, hardship, chaos, and crisis—sure—but also joy, disappointment, hope, envy, admiration, and that strange blend of love and resentment, like someone opened the floodgates of emotion. And through it all, we've gotten pretty good at turning inward. Yes, being part of a community had its perks, but the reality always hit when the lights went out and your head hit the pillow—you were alone. First and foremost, we were individuals. Eventually, people started wondering, *"If it feels like the whole world is against me, is it possible that I am walking the wrong path?"* That's when we started needing tidy explanations for our behaviors—little psychological patterns we could hold on to.

When the new millennium rolled in, pop culture began churning out mass-produced heroes, and suddenly "normal" started looking a lot more… superhuman. Marvel, DC, and their rivals slipped the supernatural into everyday life. A kid gets bitten by a spider—suddenly he's swinging between skyscrapers. Another loses his parents in a dark alley and turns grief into a weapon. A man in tights and a cape channels his rage into justice, and somehow that becomes the standard.

Our idea of "normal" grew strange, and once it shifted, it never stayed put. Each "new normal" came in waves, washing the old ones away until they felt outdated—almost embarrassing. Behaviors that had broken out of their shells refused to crawl back in.

Meanwhile, science was hard at work unpacking the machinery of emotion, struggling to make sense of our irrational side. And so—from the individual to the collective, from personal quirks to cultural shifts—every twist of the human story has, in its own way, led to the creation of the book you're holding now. In a world where there are more writers than readers, did we *really* need another book on the shelf? Probably not. But like Margaret Atwood says in *Negotiating with the Dead*, every piece of writing comes from a need:

> "To keep the past from being entirely forgotten.
> To drag the forgotten past into the light.
> Because if I don't keep writing, I'll die.
> To entertain. Because of the muse.
> To make up for a flawed childhood.
> To speak for the dead.
> To celebrate life in all its complexity.
> To praise the universe.

To believe in hope and redemption…" And my favorite: "To give back some of what has been given to me."

Beyond the emotional rollercoaster in Margaret's words, the heart of this book lies in my love for knowledge—and my curiosity about how we come to know what we know. What captivates me most isn't just the knowledge itself, but the feelings and processes we go through as we reach for it, and as we pass it on. Some of the book's ideas come from the deep, murky corners of the internet, some from academic research, others from the mind-opening conversations and mental gymnastics I've had with my dear friend Ali Gül, and many more from lived experiences. Psychological quirks, those everyday behaviors that leave us stumped until we learn the reason behind them and go, *"No*

way!", martial arts, theorems, human patterns—it's all in here.

Is this book a literary masterpiece? Of course not. But is it smooth, engaging, and worth your time? Absolutely. This isn't a book that promises to answer everything, but without intimidating the reader, it will certainly raise a lot of new questions along the way. And I must say no book feels complete without acknowledgements—and the gratitude list you're about to read comes from the heart:

To my dear brother, Dr. Ali Gül, the book's silent co-author, who supported me through every step of the editorial process, calmly navigated my obsession with deadlines, and raised the intellectual bar in every conversation with his wisdom and insight.

To my beloved friend, the late Ramazan Atasoy, whose words always struck a deep chord—often inspiring, always thoughtful—and whose short yet meaningful life made me reflect on my own purpose, simply through the way he lived, with kindness and grace.

To my dear mentor, Elif Çongur, who has always stood by me on this writing journey.

To my professors, Barış Kılıçhan and Ersin Öztürk, for their continued presence, teachings, and unwavering friendship.

To my teacher, Clinical Psychologist Hülya Üstekidağ, who generously and patiently shared her deep knowledge, responding to all my questions with clarity and care.

To Sinan Dirlik and the entire Reportare team—some of the chapters in this book are expanded and up-

dated versions of articles originally written for Reportare.com.

To Ezgi Yıldızoğlu, whose stunning illustrations perfectly captured the spirit of this book.

To Soner Torlak and the Hayalci Hücre team, whose diligence and professionalism I admire deeply across every step of the publishing process.

To my daughter, Doğa—who darted around the room, covered my arm with kisses, and filled my writing with her joy. Many of the most impassioned lines were born in those moments.

And to my wife, Meltem—my refuge in every storm—who has made this adventure beautiful, graceful, and unforgettable.

And of course, to you—my readers. Whether you picked up this book out of curiosity, enthusiasm, or social media hype; whether you loved it or didn't; whether you offered feedback or read silently; whether you underlined passages or skimmed through them; whether you praised it or even cursed it—thank you. Every bit of it matters.

Onur Uğur

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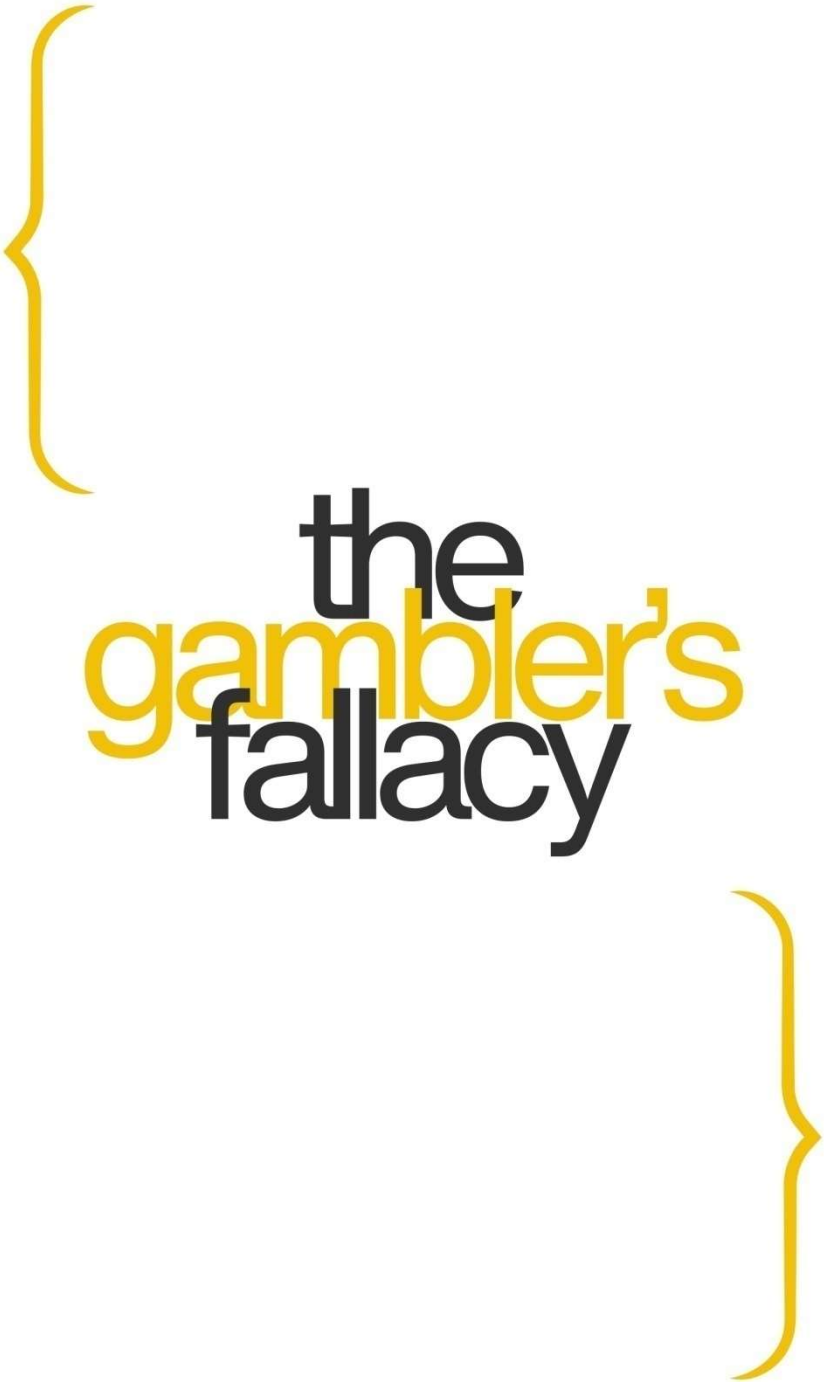
the
gambler's
fallacy

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"Artificial intelligence can never
defeat organic stupidity."

Ali Gül

Postmodernism and positivism—two charming little concepts lighting up our intellectual skies these days. A dynamic duo, like Pokémon's Team Rocket: *"Prepare for trouble! And make it double!"* These ideologies, both strangely assertive in their convictions, make us question everything we thought we knew about truth. Positivism, with its firm acclamation that true knowledge can only be attained through scientific methods, insists that only measurable, experimental data counts as "real." In doing so, it brushes aside values and meaning, paving the way for all kinds of trickery and mischief hidden behind the cold façade of numbers. Postmodernism, meanwhile, rejected authority altogether. It dismantled monopolized definitions and rigid forms, giving us the freedom to call a banana duct-taped to a wall "art" and, in the process, turned reality into something you can stretch, reshape, or flip on its head as you please.

Take the curious case of storks and birth rates—as in, the age-old myth that storks deliver babies. According to a study published in *Pediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology* titled *"New Evidence for the Theory of the Stork,"* researchers found a statistical correlation between the number of storks and the number of babies born in Northern Europe. So... Do storks really bring babies? Well, anyone who's ever had a child can confidently say: definitely not. This kind of faulty reasoning—where data is twisted to suggest causation where

there is none—isn't just an academic error. When misunderstood, lofty concepts like postmodernism or positivism, combined with our desire to reach a predetermined conclusion, spill over into everyday thinking. We all try to justify the outcomes we wish were true. And more often than not, we succeed.

There is a certain comfort in saying "I'll do it on purpose" (like turkeys vote for early Christmas).

There's a peculiar comfort in knowingly setting yourself up for failure. Even when we sense that something is going wrong, an unnamed feeling whispers, "Come on, let's be a little reckless!"—and we take the bait. It's like expecting good results from a test we bombed; our ability to ignore the negative may very well be one of the main reasons we've survived as a species. The first human stepped out of their cave with unshakable confidence that they wouldn't get trampled by a mammoth, and from that moment on, humanity has been twisting the odds in its favor. We fought wars, convinced that the bullet wouldn't hit us. We assumed earthquakes only happened in other cities. We believed that death only came for other families, reassuring ourselves, *"No one we know will die."*

As kids, we were all going to be astronauts and genetic engineers. Even as we drifted into jobs we never wanted, inching toward retirement, we clung to the belief that we could break free at any moment. Every lottery ticket fueled our grand illusions; even when we didn't win, the consolation prizes weren't enough to snuff out our dreams.

While artificial intelligence struggles to anchor itself in a sea of uncertainty, organic intelligence effortlessly turns concrete reality upside down. Lie loudly

enough, repeat it often enough, and soon, people will believe it. In short, humans refuse to let statistics and probability meddle with their desires. No matter what, we always find a way to believe exactly what we want to believe.

The most popular symbol of luck is the four-leaf clover. Then the horseshoe and the ladybug. Look at Japanese culture, and you'll find the chubby, paw-waving Maneki Neko. But oddly enough, when you examine different cultures' lucky charms, you'll notice that none of them actually *belong* to luck itself.

A pair of dice, let's say. We don't consider them symbols of luck—at best, they represent gambling or shady dealings. That's because luck, as a concept, has a squeaky-clean reputation. It's not something we overanalyze; when luck arrives, it feels whole and unquestionable. But luck has a darker side: people convince themselves it will always be on their side. And that's how luck deceives us—by making itself seem endless.

In 1913, at a casino in Monte Carlo, the roulette wheel landed on black twenty-six times in a row. As you might guess, gamblers kept thinking, *"There's no way it'll be black again!"* and eagerly bet on red. But with each black outcome, they became even more convinced that red was overdue. It's the same illusion that makes us believe that if a coin lands on heads sixteen times in a row, the seventeenth flip is somehow more likely to be tails. Or that after rolling double sixes three times, we're practically destined to roll them a fourth. Yet the further we drift from analytical thinking, the further we stray from actual probabilities.

The truth? The chances of getting heads or tails on a coin flip are always 50%, no matter what happened be-

fore. This misconception—where people assume past outcomes influence future results in independent events—is called the *Monte Carlo Fallacy*, or *Gambler's Fallacy*. But here's something worth noting: for this fallacy to apply, the event must be symmetrical—meaning each outcome has an equal probability every time. Asymmetrical events don't count. For example, hitting multiple strikes in bowling or making consecutive clean shots in basketball depends on skill and technique, not pure chance. So if you're going to gamble, betting on a player's skill rather than falling for cognitive illusions is the smarter move. That is—unless, of course, the dice are rigged…

The belief in the continuity of luck and success—just like the Gambler's Fallacy—relies on the illusion that independent events influence each other. Our brain's lower systems work overtime to reinforce this idea. Otherwise, how else could we explain why it always seems to rain right after we wash our car? Or why we've been conditioned to think, *"We laughed too much—now we're bound to cry!"* The assumption that success is permanent is just another version of this cognitive bias. Call it success, victory, or invincibility—whatever you like. But one thing is certain: these concepts are anything but everlasting. In fact, forget permanence—by the very nature of dialectics, they *can't* be continuous. And this is where things get tricky: the very decisions that once led you to triumph could be the ones that bring about your downfall. The habits that propelled you from one success to another yesterday could leave you running laps alone today. That's when you realize—concepts like victory and achievement cast enormous shadows.

Successes that aren't truly absorbed, victories that aren't examined for their underlying causes—these become the seeds of your next failure. Take General Magic, Apple's ambitious 1990s startup that tried to pioneer smartphone technology before anyone else. They made one brilliant decision after another, secured over $200 million in investment, and yet—they failed. Or look at Nokia. Were their choices really that terrible? Not at all. Every move was logical, calculated, and well-founded. But their past triumphs fooled them into believing the winning streak would never end. As Bane so aptly puts it in *The Dark Knight Rises*, facing a Batman who had grown complacent after years without a real challenge:

"Victory has defeated you!"

Losing to rivals is understandable—it's disappointing, but not nearly as devastating as losing to oneself. The greatest defeats are the ones we create with our own hands, and they always carry traces of past victories. Invincibility is the pinnacle of strength, yet humans are foolish enough to believe in it, blissfully ignoring probabilities. They prefer to explain their detachment from statistics through emotions, fate, or rigid beliefs. That's why a loss suffered under the illusion of invincibility can shatter not just achievements and past experiences, but even the very foundation of one's identity. Those who attribute a streak of victories or the momentum of external factors solely to their own brilliance are the first to stumble when faced with adversity. Success is intoxicating, and there's no reason to doubt its continuity. If it has happened once, why shouldn't it happen again? In fact, common belief suggests that what hap-

pens once is bound to happen repeatedly—even inevitably.

But is there truly no way to break free from this mindset? Must we always feel uneasy after a win? Should we resign ourselves to the idea that every success will eventually be followed by failure? Of course not. What we need is a clear understanding of external factors and the bigger picture. True insight comes from analyzing strengths and weaknesses in balance. The question *"How did we succeed?"* cannot be separated from *"What obstacles stood in our way, and how did we overcome them?"* Every choice we make is bound to the ones we don't. Just as in economics, choosing cola means forgoing ayran. Every right decision gains strength from the alternatives you reject.

This is also why the "tenth man rule" exists—one of the most effective ways to avoid the gambler's fallacy. To truly understand that no one can make the right decision every time, there must always be someone who opposes the consensus. In a group of ten people, if everyone agrees, at least one should argue the opposite—even to the point of proving its validity to the rest. This is how decision-making mechanisms regulate themselves. Examining an issue from the reverse angle prevents blind consensus, sharpens awareness of the situation, and makes it easier to identify the forces at play.

As illustrated in Adam Fewer's well-known book *Improbable*, when you flip a coin, the probability of landing on heads or tails is 50%. Yet if we could account for every force acting on the coin—its speed, the influence of the wind, its weight—we could greatly improve our ability to predict the outcome. In other words, sound decision-making depends on being aware

of probabilities and freeing ourselves from biases about which outcomes are "destined" to occur.

Choosing to believe in something at the expense of reality and rational thinking is what we call cognitive bias—and there are more than 180 of them. This book is full of examples that will show you just how easily the little decision-making systems in our minds can be misled. But if we only view cognitive biases and perceptual distortions as flaws shaping our daily lives, we risk feeling powerless or even vulnerable. After all, we make an average of 33.000 decisions every day—are we really supposed to analyze each one through the *lens of theory?* Thankfully, no. History isn't written by those who follow rigid logic at every turn. Sometimes, the inability to think rationally leads to great adventures. Bad ideas make for great stories. Just ask the first human who walked out of their cave, fully convinced they wouldn't be trampled by a mammoth.

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diderot and an ode to my old dressing gown

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"The more a man possesses over and above what he uses, the more careworn he becomes."

Bernard Shaw

I'd just stepped into the store to buy a suit — ideally something dark blue, no pinstripes, two-button, Italian cut. With a modest budget, I wandered through the racks, absentmindedly running my fingers along the hangers like someone playing a silent piano. When the prices are too high and your hands speed up, it starts to sound — at least in your head — like a frantic version of *La Campanella*. If you've ever browsed aimlessly through racks, you know what I mean.

The second type is the 'eager one.' They appear out of nowhere, like Batman, right behind you. They ask how they can help, won't accept a simple 'just looking' answer, and bombard you with all the details about the product—features, what you need and don't need, and how affordable the price is. They also say things like, 'These prices are only for today, if you're going to buy, now's the best time!' You won't have trouble finding this kind of salesperson because they're always right by your side, trying to stay as close to you as possible.

The third type is the 'expert one.' They wait at the right distance, using the right body language, and profile you. When your eyes meet, they smile and make you feel like they're there for you, ready to catch you if you fall, like a warm, reliable shoulder to lean on. They start the conversation with a classy question like, 'A dark suit would look great on you, are you a businessperson?' They don't overwhelm you with product details. They understand your needs, what the suit means

to you, your budget, and how you'll feel in it by asking the right questions. Knowing that you're the decision-maker during the purchase, they recognize that their answers don't matter as much—the important things are your answers. After the first interaction when you enter the store, you'll think, 'We're in trouble, this person will not let us leave empty-handed!' Don't bother looking for them, they'll find you.

During my purchase of a dark-colored suit, I came across a sales associate wearing a burgundy uniform. I was fascinated as I watched all the behavioral patterns I had just read about being applied to me. For example, he said, 'Since you have broad shoulders, we should be careful with slim-fit options.' The mastery of that sentence caught my attention: a praise, a subtle warning, and the message 'I know what I'm doing.' After helping me choose a shirt and shoes to go with the suit, the burgundy-clad salesperson also skillfully added accessories like belts and pocket squares to my cart. But the finishing touch, the cherry on top, was when he included a shoe-cleaning product and a wallet in my package. The gift of a shoehorn and a pocket square somehow made me feel like I'd made a successful purchase. I felt like I had tricked the store into giving me more than I expected. That's how I walked out of the store, feeling like I won. We need to convince ourselves that the purchase decisions we make will provide the greatest benefit to us. It's not enough for our needs to be met; we must also gain some extra advantage. When purchasing a product or service, our primary motivation is to make a profit, and we assess advantages through comparison. For example, the decision to order a larger-sized cola and fries with only a 1.5 lira difference leads us to make this comparison. The impulse to get more of the

same product for a small price difference is independent of the size of the need. The idea of 'more food for just 1.5 lira more is a resounding yes in every regard. This psychology of comparison doesn't only apply to upward comparisons. Categorizing products or services also sets the foundation for these comparison paths. A good example of this is when the same product is offered in three different sizes:

Let's say you're considering buying two chocolate bars. A 5-gram pistachio chocolate costs 5 lira, and a 30-gram pistachio chocolate costs 25 lira. While the 30-gram package seems more cost-effective, the price advantage of the smaller pack might attract us. In the smaller pack, the cost per gram is 1 lira, whereas the larger pack costs us 0.83 lira per gram. However, questions like 'Do I need the larger pack?' will influence our purchase decision. In this case, offering a wider range of products increases the potential for comparisons in purchase decisions, thus benefiting the seller by selling more products.

For instance, imagine adding a 15-gram pistachio chocolate bar priced at 14 lira. Suddenly, the decision changes. With more options on the table, the medium choice now feels more reasonable. The cost per gram of the pistachio chocolate comes out to 0.93 lira—but that doesn't really matter. We convince ourselves we're getting more chocolate for less. Our decision now narrows to the medium or large packages, where we compare which is more cost-effective. The 5-gram pistachio bar is no longer even part of the equation.

This phenomenon is known in marketing as the *"Decoy Effect."* The available options are deliberately structured so that the consumer feels they're making the

right choice and gaining the greatest value. The *Decoy Effect* also has another advantage: once a customer begins comparing a product internally, alternatives outside that frame lose their appeal. In the case of pistachio chocolate sold in three different sizes, the profitability equation nudges the consumer away from considering dark chocolate altogether. The moment we start comparing, options beyond the comparison set begin to fade from view.

Successful purchases and the boundless nature of consumption lead us on a cross-brand journey. With each sense of completion, we rush to fill what we perceive as missing. My dark suit and the other items I had bought were so elegant that I suddenly realized I didn't own a briefcase worthy of them. This suit deserved better. So, I bought a new one. But then—did I have a coat to match? Of course not. And once I had the coat, shouldn't I also get leather gloves to complete the look? Naturally, yes. As I walked around with all these new acquisitions, I began to wonder whether my old sunglasses still fit seamlessly with the style. I didn't think so. In the end, what started with a single dark blue suit drove me to replace everything tied to the very idea of a suit—its essential touchpoints. I even found myself craving a stylish office desk, a chic desk lamp, a valet stand, and a new car in which my suit could travel comfortably—all desires that surfaced before rational thought had a chance to intervene. Consumption, it seemed, truly had no limits.

When browsing e-commerce platforms, we often exhibit certain buying behaviors. The wrongness of our purchasing decisions becomes apparent only long after the fact, when we find ourselves asking, 'Why did I buy this?' The drawers under our beds are full of these deci-

sions. Moreover, shopping not only satisfies our physical needs but also our emotional ones. Some purchases that seem absurd to us today are reflections of needs we once had. Books we bought to read but never even opened are a perfect example. Flashcards for learning a foreign language, quilling sets we bought in hopes of starting a new hobby, and gym memberships we signed up for because we thought, 'Enough, it's time for me to work out, I need a beach body'—these are all purchases made to meet emotional needs. As for the Spider-Man figurine stuck to the wall, I'm not sure which need it was supposed to fulfill.

Born on October 5th, 1713, Denis Diderot, one of the most important figures of the Enlightenment, was a writer and philosopher whose works and ideas laid the groundwork for the French Revolution. Diderot observed the growing frenzy of consumption in the 18th century. While earning the admiration of his peers through his works and achievements, he fell into massive debt, directly linked to his success. In an effort to rescue Diderot from his financial ruin, Empress Catherine the Great of Russia first purchased Diderot's library and then gifted it back to him. Furthermore, the Empress employed Diderot as a librarian and paid him a 25-year salary in advance, thus freeing him from debt. Suddenly wealthy, Diderot reflected on his consumption frenzy in his 1769 work, *Regrets for My Old Robe*. According to the text, Diderot had long desired a red robe, but upon acquiring it and wearing it, he felt compelled to replace his desk, rug, and everything around him, ultimately falling back into debt. The writer-philosopher described this situation as follows: "I was the absolute master of my old robe. I have become the slave of the new one."

In this work, where Diderot describes the instantaneous decisions made in purchasing actions and the allure of consumption, the key point was later coined as the 'Diderot Effect' by anthropologist and consumer behavior expert Grant McCracken in 1988. This effect explains the consumer's drive to achieve a sense of wholeness in their behavior, demonstrating that purchasing decisions are not solely driven by need, but by the additional meanings each purchase can carry. One purchase setting the stage for another shows how consumption can evolve into an entirely new dimension when viewed through the lens of wholeness. However, despite all these insights into consumer behavior, I still don't understand the motivation behind purchasing a Spider-Man figurine to stick on a wall. I hope I haven't angered the 'Spider-Man-on-the-wall' lobby.

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"The world has enough for everyone's needs,
but not enough for everyone's greed."

Mahatma Gandhi

The world is run by corporations. I know that sounds like something a keyboard cowboy would tweet without doing a shred of research. Phrases like "We have a seat at every table" or "The papers have been signed!" echo canned, information-deprived, scientifically baseless proclamations, spreading half-truths and rumors. Whether the world is actually run by corporations or not is beyond me—I don't claim to have the necessary insight. Liberal friends who insist the Covid-19 vaccine should be sold and distributed by private companies probably know more than I do.

Still, I can't help but wonder when I type "sweatpants" into Google and see the sleekest models flooding my Instagram stories three minutes later.

These days, instead of comparing air fryer models, I just whisper "air fryer models" to my phone and wait for the algorithm to guide me. Soon, air fryers slide into my Instagram feed and pop up on news sites, turning my "Are we being listened to?" paranoia into a practical life hack.

But the idea that corporations are woven into every fiber of our lives is unsettling. If AI can perform such intricate analysis, shouldn't solving health crises be just as easy? With data-driven strategies, collaborative workshops, timelines full of kick-offs and milestones, and a little friendly competition, success seems inevita-

ble. After all, everyone is a customer—internal or external—and nothing else matters.

Look, even racism is gone. It no longer matters whether you're Black or white, Muslim or Christian, or where you live. All that counts is your value to the company. Logistics is king, so no country would ever block a product at the border. If the world were one giant corporation, goods from Europe could be shipped straight to Iran. Pipelines wouldn't be sacrificed for politics. The shipping team would also handle security, ensuring every settlement along the route remains stable. No one wants their cargo looted—or would even allow it.

From this perspective, product shipments could actually contribute to world peace. It almost seems like turning governance into a corporate structure might be the key to global stability and harmony. But… is it really?

At first glance, the idea of corporations running the world might seem logical based on the arguments above. On paper, systems built around efficiency and maximizing overall benefit could, in theory, make the planet a better place. The real problem, however, lies in not understanding how corporations actually operate—or worse, in bending reality to fit a comforting narrative, becoming a sort of corporate Pollyanna. Romanticizing corporate structures leads us to believe that profit-driven organizations can solve the world's problems. But this kind of thinking inevitably leads us into a dead end—where some of the most critical issues remain unsolved.

Now, just take a moment and imagine the world being run by a single corporation. Just for one minute. For

example, which department would be responsible for solving world hunger? If hunger were merely seen as a statistic, and decision-makers deemed it acceptable for 5% of the population to be malnourished, would any resources actually be allocated to solving the problem? With the global population already exceeding eight billion, that 5% could easily be dismissed as negligible in the eyes of a corporation.

Do we have any idea how internal corporate conflicts would be managed? The tensions between sales and finance, the scramble between production and logistics to meet deadlines—these can't simply be resolved by firing someone and moving on. Anything that threatens profitability is treated as a nuisance to be eliminated—especially vulnerable groups that raise costs. Just as a manufacturer of eyeglasses might not prioritize blind individuals, there could be countless groups that corporations deem unnecessary or unprofitable. To illustrate how a profit-first mindset affects quality and cultural value, take TRT, Turkey's national broadcaster. In the past, when profitability wasn't its main concern, the channel offered high-quality programming: classical music concerts on weekends, thoughtful film criticism and discussions, music programs featuring a curated mix of Western and Turkish music, and children's shows like *Sesame Street*, designed to foster good values rather than maximize ad revenue. But once profitability enters the picture, everything shifts toward what fits that definition of success. And profitability isn't always just about money—it can be about prestige, PR, or public perception. And if Sermet Erkin pulling a rabbit out of his hat doesn't serve that profitability, well, that rabbit stays in the hat.

Companies strive to maintain profitability in a sustainable way, and the measure of that profitability often lies in the concepts they control. If global power dynamics revolve around owning concepts, it would be naive to think that corporations haven't played a role in shaping major historical events. So, let’s take a quick look at a company that once dominated its region, redrew maps, and left its mark on history: the British East India Company. When Vasco da Gama arrived in India in 1498, the Portuguese became the first European nation to trade with the subcontinent. However, their presence wasn’t long-lived, due to factors like aggressive missionary efforts and their dependence on foreign fleets rather than their own.

Following the Portuguese, the Dutch entered the scene, even establishing their own trading company: *The Dutch East India Company* (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*). If you've guessed that “kumpanya” comes from the English word “company,” you're correct. This means that not every *East India Company* refers specifically to the British one. The French, Dutch, and Portuguese all had their own *East India Companies*, each competing for dominance in the region.

The British, aware of the profits made by the Portuguese and Dutch, approached colonialism differently during those years. Instead of establishing direct administrative control over a region, they preferred to operate through profit-driven corporations. In India, colonial rule initially was not a structured state policy but rather a commercial enterprise. Unfortunately, it didn’t take long for the British to realize that maximizing profitability could be achieved more effectively by disregarding human rights. It was under these conditions that the

British East India Company was established in 1600 by royal charter, granting it exclusive rights to trade with the East Indies. This charter also ensured privileges such as trade monopolies, tax exemptions, and the exclusion of other British merchants from operating in the designated territories.

Between 1600 and 1858, the British East India Company evolved into a corporation with its own military power. At its peak, it commanded an army of 260,000 soldiers, nearly twice the size of the British Crown's forces. The British East India Company was not just a trading entity but one of the largest commercial organizations of its time, dealing in tea, silver, opium, textiles, gunpowder, and spices, among other essential goods. However, one of its most shocking and consequential trade ventures was its opium trade with China. Imagine an entire society being transformed by the introduction of opium. The British, despite prohibiting such drugs in their own country, exported opium to China in exchange for tea and porcelain. This led to widespread addiction among the Chinese population, significantly weakening Chinese society. Naturally, this sparked resistance, and what followed was one of history's darkest chapters: the *Opium Wars*. These conflicts, instigated by British economic interests, ultimately forced China into unequal treaties, opening its ports to British control and marking the beginning of a long period of Western dominance over China.

Do corporations rule the world? We can debate that in another article; however, the 250-year story of the British East India Company, which once officially governed India, is far too vast to be summarized in a mere twenty-minute read. In this organization, company executives were considered governors, making it much

more than just a business venture. If you'd like to explore this topic in greater depth, you might consider reading Nick Robins' *The Corporation That Changed the World* or Taha I. Özel's *The British East India Company*. After diving into these books, you can decide for yourself: Should corporations govern the world, or should we prioritize human values when designing businesses that contribute to society?

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