

Conclusion: This Is Not a Moral Argument

This book has resisted a familiar temptation: to explain outcomes by assigning virtue or blame. That temptation is understandable. Moral stories are comforting. They allow us to believe the world is sorted by intention rather than exposure.

What has been shown instead is quieter and more difficult to accept. In systems built on recurring constraints, outcomes are shaped primarily by structure. Effort determines participation, not destination.

This does not deny responsibility. It relocates it. Responsibility governs behavior within a system. Structure governs what that behavior can plausibly achieve.

When constraints stack and margins thin, probability replaces merit as the dominant sorting mechanism. Failure becomes a steady state, not an aberration.

The persistence of this failure does not imply cruelty or conspiracy. It implies function. Pressure disciplines behavior. Belief preserves legitimacy. Opposition manages harm without confronting its source.

Understanding this does not lead to despair. It leads to clarity. Once structure is visible, debates can move from character to conditions.

The question facing any society is not whether effort should matter. It is whether systems will continue to convert ordinary life into sustained risk.

This book has offered no prescriptions because prescriptions without structural honesty are performance.

What has been offered instead is a lens. Through it, familiar arguments appear differently. Persistence replaces surprise. Patterns replace anecdotes.

If this lens holds, then the future is not decided by exhortation or blame. It is decided by how much constraint a system can impose before belief breaks—and whether it can widen margins without losing coherence.

That choice remains unresolved. But it cannot be made clearly until the world is seen as it is.

This is not a moral argument. It is a structural one. The consequences of mistaking one for the other have already been made clear.

