

The Death of Homo Economicus

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2026-07

Synopsis

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inLanguage	english

For neoclassical economists, *Homo economicus*, or economic human, represents the ideal employee: an energetic worker bee that is a rational yet competitive decision-maker. Alternatively, one could view the concept as a cold and selfish workaholic endlessly seeking the accumulation of money and advancement - a chilling representation of capitalism. Or perhaps, as Peter Fleming argues, *Homo economicus* does not actually exist at all.

In *The Death of Homo Economicus*, Fleming presents this controversial claim with the same fierce logic and perception that launched his *Guardian* column into popularity. Fleming argues that as an invented model of a human being, *Homo economicus* is, in reality, a tool used by economists and capitalists to manage our social world through the state, business, and even family. As workers, we are barraged with constant reminders that we should always strive toward this ideal persona. It's implied - and sometimes directly stated - that if we don't then we are failures. Ironically, the people most often encouraged to emulate this model are those most predisposed to fail due to their socioeconomic circumstances: the poor, the unemployed, students, and prisoners.

Fleming illuminates why a peculiar proactive negativity now marks everyday life in capitalist societies, and he explores how this warped, unattainable model for workers would cause chaos if enacted to the letter. Timely and revelatory, *The Death of Homo Economicus* offers a sharp, scathing critique of who we are supposed to be in the workplace and beyond.

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