

Video Interview with Yuval Noah Harari

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Harari: Just as God in the Bible designed and creates animals, plants and humans, according to His wishes, now we are learning how to design/create life.

Woman: Yuval Harari thinks big for a living. Not so long ago he was an obscure history professor, but his 2014 books *Sapiens* changed all that. He explored the past, cramming 150,000 years of history into 400 pages.

Harari: Authority will shift...

Woman: transforming himself into a literary phenomenon.

Man: Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome once again, Yuval Noah Harari

Woman: Name drops by the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates and Barack Obama

Obama: The other book that I really enjoyed, a book by an Israeli author—Yuval Harari

Woman: His follow up book *Homo Deus* tackled the future, elevating Harari to a sort of digital visionary. Now he's back with this take on the present day. His new book: *Twenty One Lessons for the 21st Century* explores the influence of algorithms on our everyday lives. How Artificial Intelligence will affect and maybe even replace us.

Harari: [We] Don't have any answer in the Bible what to do when humans are no longer useful to the economy! You need completely new ideologies, completely new religions, and they are likely to emerge from Silicon Valley, or from Bangalore and not from the Middle East. They are likely to give people visions based on technology. Everything that all religions promised—happiness, justice and even eternal life—but here on earth with the help of technology and not after death, with some supernatural being.

Man: What are humans for?

Harari: As far as we know, for nothing! (laughter). There is no great cosmic drama, some great cosmic plan that we have a role to play in it. We just need to discover what our role is and then play it for the best of our ability.

This has been the story of all religions and ideologies and so forth. But as a scientist, the best I

can say is this is not true. There is no universal drama with a role in it for homo-sapiens. **If you repeat a lie often enough, people will think it's the truth. The bigger the lie, the better!**

People won't even think how that something so big can be a lie. I think that fake news has been with us for thousands of years. **Just think of the Bible.** (laughter) One option that some people talk about is that only a catastrophe can shape humankind and open the part to a real system of global governance.

And they say that we can't do it before the catastrophe, **but we need to start laying the foundations so that when the disasters strike, we can react quickly.** But people will just not have the motivation to do such a thing before the disasters strike.

So, the next step is we turn our gaze inwards and say, 'Okay, getting control of the world outside us did not really make us satisfied, **let's now try to gain control of the world inside us! This is the big, really big, project of science and technology and industry in the 21st century will be to try and gain control of the world inside us, to learn how to engineer and produce bodies, brains and minds. These are likely to be the main products of the 21st century economy.**

When people think about the future, very often they think in terms of, 'I want to gain control of my body and of my brain.' I think that's very dangerous! We still have all this 'myth of free will' that everything we choose is of our own free will, and this is a myth that served us well for a couple of centuries, but now it's becoming dangerous. We are probably one of the last generations of homo-sapiens, because in the coming generations we will learn how to engineer bodies, brains and minds!

- How exactly will the future masters of the planet look like? *This will be decided by the people who own the data!*
- Why is data so important? *It's important because we have reached the point when we can hack not just computers, **we can hack human beings** and other organisms!*
- What do you need in order to hack a human being? *You need two things:*

1. you need a lot of computing power
2. you need a lot of data, especially biometric data

Control of data might enable human elites to do something even more radical that just build digital

dictatorships. **By hacking organisms, elites may gain the power to re-engineer the future of life itself.** Once you can hack something, you can usually also engineer it.

All of life for 4-million years, dinosaurs, ameba, tomatoes, humans, all of life was subject to the laws of natural selections, and to the laws of organic biochemistry. But this is now about to change; science is replacing evolution by natural selection with evolution by “**intelligent design.**” **Not the Intelligent Design by some God above the clouds!** But *our* “**intelligent design**”! And the “intelligent design” above our clouds” the IBM clouds, the Microsoft cloud. These are the new driving forces of evolution.

At the same time, science may enable life—after being confined for 4-billion years to the limited realm of organic compounds—science may enable life to break out into the inorganic realm.

Human’s are now hackable animals. You know, the whole idea that humans have this soul or spirit and that they have free will, and nobody knows what’s happening inside me, so whatever I choose—whether in the election or whether in the supermarket—this is my free will. That’s over! Free will, that’s over!

Today we have the technology to hack human beings on a massive scale. Everything is being digitalized, everything is being monitored. In this time of crisis, you have to follow science. It’s often said that you should ‘never allow a good crisis to go to waste’; because a crisis is an opportunity to also do good reforms, that in normal times people will never agree to. But in a crisis, you see, we have no choice. So, let’s do it!

Woman: That won’t help us.

Harari: It will help us, of course! It will make things, you know, more manageable. Surveillance! People could look back in a hundred years and identify **the virus epidemic as the moment when a new regime of surveillance took over,** especially surveillance under the skin, which I think is maybe the most important development of the 21st century. It’s this ability to hack human beings, **to go under the skin, collect biometric data, analyze it and understand people better than they understand themselves!** This, I believe, is maybe the most important event of the 21st century.

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Maybe, I think, in a couple of decades, when people look back, the thing they will remember from the Covid crisis is that this is the moment when everything went digital, and this was the moment when everything became (inaudible), that we agreed to be surveilled all the time, not just in authoritarian regimes, but even in democracies, and maybe most important of all, **this was the moment when surveillance started going under the skin.**

Really, we haven’t seen anything, yet! I think that the big process that’s happening right now in the world is hacking human beings. The ability to hack humans. To understand deeply what’s happening within you; what make you go.

For that, the most important data is not what you read, who you meet and what you buy, it’s what’s happening inside your body. So, we have these two big revolutions:

1. the computer science revolution
2. the revolution in the biological sciences

Those two separate, but they are about to merge. They are merging around, I would say, the biometric sensors. It’s the thing, the gadgets, it’s the technologies that converts biological data into digital data that can be analyzed by computers.

Having the ability to really monitor people under the skin, this is the biggest game changer of all! We have seen so far it’s corporations and governments collecting data about:

- where we go
- who we meet
- what movies we watch

The next phase is the surveillance going under our skin! The mass surveillance systems established, even in democratic countries, which previously rejected them, and we also see a change in the nature of surveillance.

Previously, surveillance was mainly above the skin, now it’s going under the skin. Governments want to know, not just where we go or who we meet, but above all they want to know what is happening under our skin:

- what’s our body temperature
- what’s our blood pressure
- what is our medical condition

Now humans are developing even bigger powers than ever before. We are really acquiring divine powers of creation and destruction. We are really upgrading humans into gods. We are acquiring, for instance the power to re-engineer life.

All this story about Jesus rising from the dead and being the Son of God, this is fake news!

Only in recent years we saw populace politicians undermining deliberately the trust that people have in important institutions, like universities, like respectable media outlets. These populace politicians told people that scientists of this small elite, disconnected from there real people, you shouldn't believe them. And you had all these conspiracy theories that climate change is just a hoax, it's not real, and that the earth is actually flat and that vaccinations are bad for you.

But I don't think it's too late, especially in an emergency people can change their views very fast, and they can discover hidden reservoirs of trust. Look at this crisis, who do people trust? *They trust scientists above everything else!* In all countries. In Israel they closed down the synagogues. In Iran they closed the Mosques. Churches all over the world are telling people don't come to church. The Pope is bringing all his ceremonies on Zoom or YouTube.

Why do they do all this? *Because the scientists recommended it!* Even the religious leaders have trust in the scientists.

The easiest people to manipulate are...

Man: People like me!

Harari: ...because you manipulate them and they don't even suspect, because 'Hey, I chose it because it's my free will.'

We need some kind of global loyalty and global identity! Earth will be populated, or even dominated, by entities that are not organic. That they don't breathe! They don't have emotions!

The potential of A.I. is much, much bigger than any historical revolution. It's really a biological revolution.

Now if you give the tools to start changing or overcoming biology, just think about sex life. Almost every religion and every ideology wanted to really change human sexuality, or limit it. But they couldn't. You had vows of chastity in the church. How many people actually bowed to their vows of chastity.

Now then, if you can really start messing with human biology, what will be the result of these sexual fantasies of different religions and ideologies.

Then the big political and economic question of the 21st century will be:

- What do we need humans for?
- or at least
- What do we need so many humans for?

Man: Do you have an answer in your book?

Harari: At present, the best guess we have is 'keep them happy with drugs and computer games.'

Man: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us tonight. My question indeed is bit more personal. You've called yourself *the prophet*. Tonight (inaudible)

Harari: I repeatedly deny...

Man: How do you feel being so influential?

Harari: Only just in the last few years. {inaudible: talking over each other}

Man: You have powers somehow to convince leaders...

Harari: The thing that is helping me deal with such a thing, just one person, so people see me and they think I'm doing.... I actually do very little. The people who work hard are my team members, organize this and everything.

Also, I repeatedly tell people that they shouldn't see me as a kind of prophet or guru, I don't know...

(the film ends with):

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? *1-Corinthians 1:20*

Transcribed: bo—6/29/23