



Participants Discuss Our World

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Our World: The Participants Speak

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- Participants take charge of this session and share their thoughts about:
 - What does Our World mean to me?
 - Where is Our World going?
 - What is an issue in Our World that matters to me the most, and what do I think about it?
 - What Our World might look like in the next five decades.

What does
Our World
mean to me?

A place to strive for change:

“Historians study the past not in order to repeat it, but in order to be liberated from it....

Movements seeking to change the world often begin by rewriting history, thereby enabling people to reimagine the future... Only a string of chance events created the unjust world we know today. If we act wisely, we can change that world and create a much better one,” (Harari, pp 59-60).



Where is
Our World
going?

Inequality

(We live) in a world where one billion people earn less than \$1.00 a day, and another 1.5 billion earn between dollars one and 2 per day... And the economic gaps are at present only increasing. As of early 2016, some 62 richest people in the world were worth as much as the poorest 3.6 billion people! Since the world's population is about 7.2 billion*, it means that these 62 billionaires together hold as much wealth as the entire bottom half of mankind (Harari, p 352).

(*U.S. Census Bureau, January 2024, estimates it at above 8 billion).

Capitalism Triumphs

As people adopted the Marxist diagnosis, they changed their behavior accordingly. Capitalists in countries such as Britain and France strove to better the lot of workers, strengthen their national consciousness, and integrate them into the political system. Consequently, when workers began voting in elections and Labour gained power in one country after another, the capitalists could sleep soundly in their beds. As a result, Marx's predictions came to naught, (Harari, p 58).

Does Capitalism Need Reform?

The collapse of the USSR, the decline and fragmentation of the working class and its movements, the military insignificance in the conventional war of the Third World, the reduction of the really poor in the developed countries to a minority 'underclass' - all these diminished the incentive for reform (Hobsbawm, p 574).

Ecological Crisis

Social distribution and not growth would dominate the politics of the new Millennium. Non-market allocation of resources, or, at least, a ruthless limitation of market allocation, was essential to head off the impending ecological crisis (Hobsbawm, pp 577-578).

To Tame Savage Capitalism, Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

Nov. 28, 1993

...a mighty power, one consuming not much less than half of the earth's currently available resources and emitting half of its pollution, insists, because of its own present-day interests, on lowering the demands of a sensible international agreement, as though it did not itself live on the same earth. Then other leading countries shirk from fulfilling even these reduced demands. Thus, in an economic race, we are poisoning ourselves.

What is an issue in Our World that matters to me the most, and what do I think about it?

Economic v Political Forces

We live in an interdependent world in which economic forces consistently defy political constraints and skepticism.

The last consolidated [USTR report](#) shows that U.S. goods and services trade with China totaled an estimated \$758.4 billion in 2022. Exports were \$195.5 billion; imports were \$562.9 billion, trade deficit with China was \$367.4 billion. Although the total volume of China-U.S. trade fluctuated over 2016-2022 by as much as 60 to 80 billion dollars, its trends and strength remained unchanged.

Economic v Political Forces

- U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in China also remains substantial in manufacturing, wholesale trade, and finance and insurance. It amounted to \$126.1 billion in 2022, a 9.0 percent increase from 2021. China's FDI in the United States (stock) was \$28.7 billion in 2022, down 7.2 percent from 2021. Chinese invest mostly in manufacturing, real estate, and depository institutions.
- As of December 2023, Japan is the largest non-U.S. holder of U.S. Treasuries, at \$1.138 trillion. [China is second on this list with \\$816.3 billion.](#)

Economic v Political Forces

- The U.S. and EU have substantially reduced their trade with Russia since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The dependence of some EU countries on Russian energy supplies, however, has yet to diminish.
- Shifting direction, [China-Russia trade](#), in the meantime, hit \$240.1 billion in 2023, growing 26.3% from a year earlier, using their national currencies. Half of Russia's oil and petroleum exports in 2023, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister said, went to China.
- I think economic actors from the private sector must find a platform to consult and jointly express their views on the disputes that vitiate the geopolitical situations.

What Our
World might
look like in
the next five
decades.

Splitting humankind into biological castes will destroy the foundation of liberal ideology. Liberalism can coexist with socioeconomic gaps. Indeed, since it favors liberty over equality, it takes such gaps for granted. ... Throughout our history, the rich have enjoyed many social and political advantages, but no huge biological gap ever separated them from the poor... In the future, however, we may see real gaps in physical and cognitive abilities opening between an upgraded upper class and the rest of society (Harari, pp 351-352).

In the twenty-first century, we might witness the creation of a massive new unworking class: people devoid of any economic, political, or even artistic value, who contribute nothing to the prosperity, power, and glory of society. This “useless class,” will not merely be unemployed but will be unemployable, (Harari, p 330).

Superfluous Humans by 2033

In September 2013, two Oxford researchers developed an algorithm that estimated that 47% of U.S. jobs are at high risk. For example, there is a 99% probability that by 2033 human telemarketers and insurance underwriters will lose their jobs to algorithms. There is a 98% probability that the same will happen to sports referees, 97 percent that it will happen to cashiers, and 96 percent to chefs. Waiters - 94 percent. Paralegal assistants – 94 percent. Tour guides - 91%. Bakers - 89%. Bus drivers - 89%. Construction laborers - 88%. Veterinary assistants - 86%. Security guards - 84%. Sailors - 83%. Bartenders - 77%. Archivists - 76%. Carpenters - 72%. Lifeguards - 67%. Archaeologists - 0.7%, (Harari, p 330).

As algorithms push humans out of the job market, wealth and power might become concentrated in the hands of the tiny elite that owns the all-powerful algorithms, creating unprecedented social and political inequality, (Harari, p 327).

The Quantified Self movement argues that the self is nothing but mathematical patterns. These patterns are so complex that the human mind has no chance of understanding them. So, if you wish to obey the old adage and know thyself, you should not waste your time on philosophy, meditation or psychoanalysis, but rather you should systematically collect biometric data and allow algorithms to analyze them for you and tell you who you are and what you should do,” (Harari, p 336).

Immortality

Throughout history, religions and ideologies did not sanctify life itself... for modern people, death is a technical problem that we can and should solve... In 2009 Google appointed another immortality true-believer, Bill Maris, to preside over the Google Ventures investment fund. In a January 2015 interview, Maris said, 'If you ask me today, is it possible to live to be 500, the answer is yes, (Harari, pp 21-24).

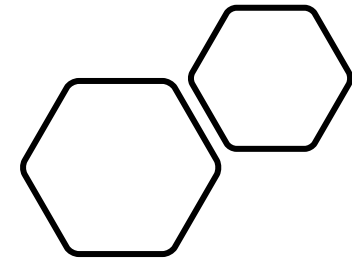
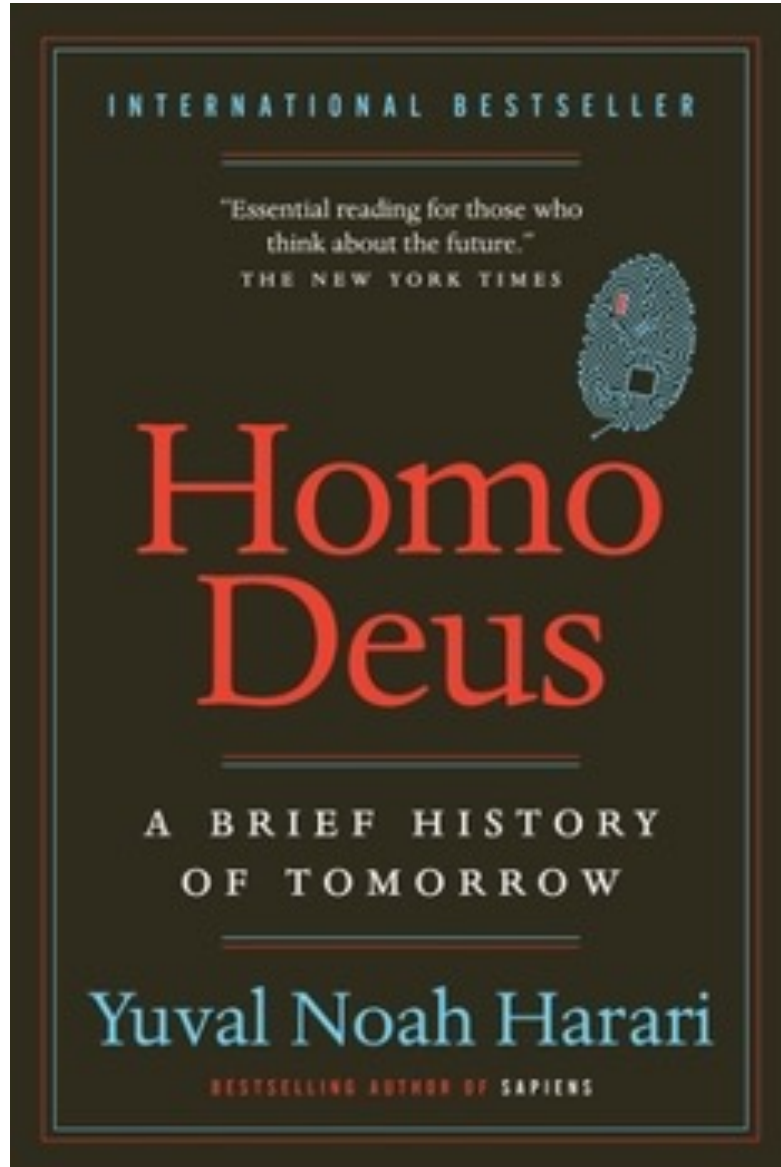
Algorithms

... The idea that humans will always have a unique ability beyond the reach of nonconscious algorithms is just wishful thinking. The current scientific answer to this pipe dream can be summarized in three simple principles.

1. Organisms are algorithms.
2. Algorithmic calculations are not affected by the materials from which the calculator is built.
3. Hence there is no reason to think that organic algorithms can do things that nonorganic algorithms will never be able to replicate or surpass, (Harari, pp 322-323).

If medical hopes are realized, future humans will incorporate into their bodies a host of biometric devices, bionic organs, and nanorobots, which will monitor our health and defend us from infections, illness, and damage. Yet these devices will have to be online 24/7, both in order to be updated with the latest medical developments and to protect them from the new plagues of cyberspace... I will wake up one day to discover that the millions of nanorobots coursing through my veins are now controlled by a North Korean hacker, (Harari, p 349).

If we are not careful, the result might be an Orwellian police state that constantly monitors and controls not only our actions but even what happens inside our bodies and our brains. Just think what uses Stalin could have found for omnipresent biometric sensors and what uses Putin might yet find for them, (Harari, p 350).



THE
AGE
OF
E x t r e m e s

"Eric Hobsbawm is one of
the few genuinely great
historians of our century."

—The New
Republic

A HISTORY OF
THE WORLD,
1914–1991



ERIC HOBSBAWM

Author of The Age of Empire



Thank you
for your
participation in the discussion.

Comments /Questions
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