Homo Deus Summary

1-Sentence-Summary: _Homo Deus_ *illustrates the history of the human race from how we came to be the dominant species over what narratives are shaping our lives today all the way to which obstacles we must overcome next to continue to thrive.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:

> "This is the best reason to learn history: not in order to predict the future, but to free yourself of the past and imagine alternative destinies."
>
> – Yuval Noah Harari
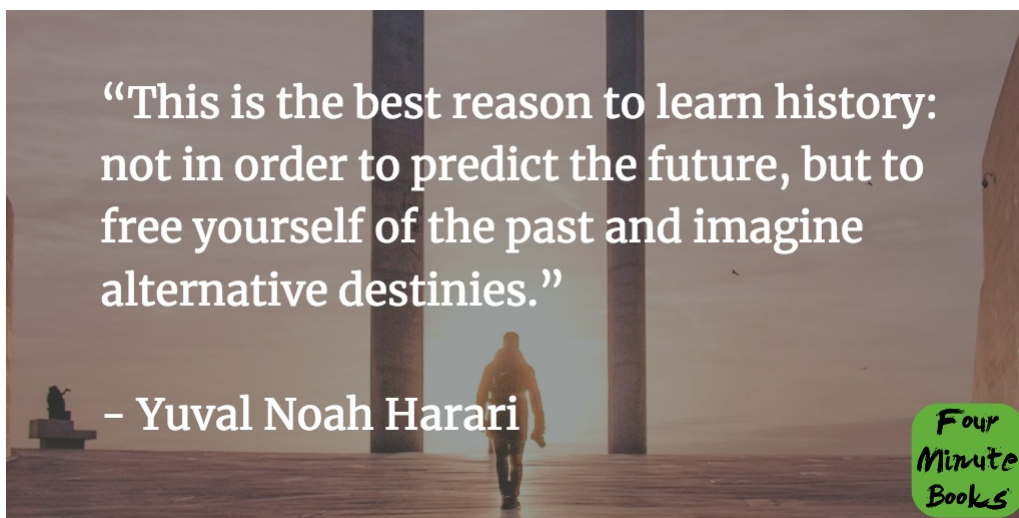
As unfathomable as it may sound, the numbers don't lie: We're more likely to die of suicide than war, obesity than starvation, old age than poverty. What's even more astonishing is that we've managed to put all these fundamental, human ailments in their place in just the last century. But that begs the question: What's next for the human race?

In _Homo Deus_, Yuval Noah Harari tries to deliver an answer. After covering our past extensively in his global, multi-million-copy bestseller *Sapiens*, Harari now turns his eyes toward the future of mankind. Following a brief recap of human history, he describes the narratives we currently use to make sense of the world. He also outlines which ones could mark our demise if we're not careful.

Here are 3 lessons I learned, one from each section of the book:

1. Shared narratives are what allow us to collaborate at large scale and, thus, dominate as a species.
2. The most prevalent, current narrative is humanism.
3. Algorithms could eventually replace us, depending on which future narrative takes over.

Are you excited about the future? Then let's take a sneak peak at what's in store for us!

Lesson 1: Stories are what make us the strongest animal on the planet.

In democratic elections around the world, millions of people make a concerted effort to agree on choosing a group leader. They're one of the best demonstrations of our ability to cooperate on a massive scale. This skill is at the heart of why humans have won the evolutionary race. But how did we develop it?

According to Harari, it's rooted in our communication. Humans have told stories since the dawn of speech. Because we can all decide what stories we believe in individually, the best stories win. Over time, we've become more intelligent, which is why, usually, **the story that wins in the long run is whichever one benefits us the most as a whole.**

Take religion, for example. Back in the Middle Ages, the story of Catholicism brought together many European nations in the Crusades. They abandoned the wars they had with one another to fight a larger one. Today, 1,000 years later, we realize that narrative only served a small portion of our population. Therefore, religion is slowly being replaced in more recent generations.

But with what?

Lesson 2: Today's dominant narrative is humanism.

Back when the world was less connected, narratives naturally formed regionally. But nowadays, we're all aware of the many different religions, political movements, and belief systems around the globe. Thanks to the internet, it's become obvious to many that there is no one, right choice for any of them.

As a result, the story that dominates the world today is humanism. **In this view of the world, humans are the central element and our individual freedom our greatest asset**. We believe in science, rationality, progress, technology, and self-actualization. There are many variants of humanism and respecting all of them is important, but the most commonly chosen one is liberalism.

Liberalism allows us to express humanism in everyday life by translating its ideas into specific moral codes, laws, and political aspirations. Even campaigns for a certain cause, like climate change awareness, less waste, or redistribution of wealth are often just liberal narratives in disguise.

The question that remains is what narratives will arise in the future. Currently, there are two major trends forming.

Lesson 3: All our future narratives involve algorithms, but if we're not careful, they could replace us altogether.

Since their invention, computers have quickly become a big part of our lives. Often more efficient at performing tasks, they allow us to enjoy more comfort in many areas. Algorithms make our work easier, help us monitor our health, and even contribute to our recreation by giving us more ways to express ourselves.

Therefore, it's not really a question of whether algorithms will be part of our future, just how. Two trends Harari sees appearing at the horizon are **techno-humanism, often called transhumanism, and dataism**. Transhumanism argues that humans should merge with technology to enhance their capabilities and keep up with the power of algorithms. Dataism, on the other hand, suggests we "get out of the way" and let algorithms become as powerful as they can become on their own.

The former is already manifesting in military technology, athletics, and health, but it also means giving up parts of what makes us human, like empathy. The latter might eventually lead to some *Matrix*-style scenario, in which the machines get rid of us because we're just in their way.

No one knows which narrative will win and if it's even one of these two, but one thing's for sure: the story of humanity will never be boring.

My personal take-aways

Yuval Noah Harari is a smart man without a doubt. He grounds his arguments in science and his vivid stories add up to a coherent picture. Naturally, what receives lots of praise also must face the scrutiny of lots of critics. While some may say his newer books, which issue warnings to not overstep our bounds, are too gloomy, but I think his ideas are always worth considering. You may not agree with everything he says, but there is definitely a lot to learn from his work. *Homo Deus* is no exception.

Read full summary on Blinkist >>

Free Preview >>

Learn more about the author >>

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- The numbers that prove our continued triumph over life's challenges
- Why we're okay with standing superior to all other animals
- What repercussions modern self-expression leads to
- Why religion is still important
- What science says about the validity of liberalism
- In which fascinating ways algorithms are already smarter than we are

Who would I recommend the Homo Deus summary to?

The 14 year old student, who's bored with what they're covering in history class, the 32 year old tech entrepreneur, who wants to invent the future, and anyone who's worried about the impact of technology on human nature.