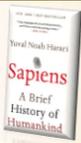


# SAPIENS: A Brief History of Humankind

by Yuval Noah Harari



## Overview

This book discusses the rise (and potential fall) of the human species, *Homo sapiens*. It documents our journey from Africa through to Europe, Asia, and then the rest of the world. It describes precisely how money evolved, it documents what caused the Religious, Agricultural, Scientific, and Industrial Revolutions, and shows how each revolution may have brought just as many problems as solutions. We *Sapiens* have a limited view of our own happiness, and must learn to truly understand technology and knowledge to flourish.

*"Don't believe tree-huggers who claim that our ancestors lived in harmony with nature."*

## PART 1. THE COGNITIVE REVOLUTION

### An Animal of No Significance

Europe and Asia were populated by ancient humans long before *Homo sapiens* (Wise Men) left Africa. *Homo neanderthalensis* (Neanderthals) and *Homo erectus* (Upright Men) were like modern man because they had larger brains, walked upright, and had domesticated fire. *Homo sapiens'* evolutionary path was non-linear. Our species existed alongside many other proto-human primates, and numerous other species. What led to the Wise Man rising above the rest? There are 2 theories:

1. The "Interbreeding Theory" proposes that different species co-bred to create genetic & racial diversity.
2. The "Replacement Theory" proposes that *Homo sapiens* eradicated other species through genocide, territorial dominance, and resource consumption.

Or perhaps *Sapiens* conquered the world with the very thing that makes such a debate possible: language.

### The Tree of Knowledge

*"The ability to create an imagined reality out of words enabled large numbers of strangers to cooperate effectively."*

While early *Homo sapiens* looked like us, their cognitive abilities were limited. The Cognitive Revolution, potentially sparked by genetic mutation, suddenly allowed our ancestors to experience heightened communication. The collective nature of society is vital for our survival, reproduction, and recreation. We are tightly bound by the shared phenomena of language, religions, and myths. Although religions, nations, and human rights are subjective, these powerful "imagined realities" push humans to work together.

### A Day in the Life of Adam & Eve

The daily experiences of ancient humans remain a mystery, as their wooden Stone Age tools have decayed. Analyzing contemporary foraging societies offers few clues due to the influence of commercial industrialization. Our forebearers used extensive specialized knowledge to benefit from an omnivorous and healthy diet. ([Click here to purchase our summary of Deep Nutrition which discusses a naturalistic diet.](#)) They worked relatively little, hunting only 2-3 days per week and gathering only 3-6 hours per day. The ancient world was dangerous and unforgiving. The weak, injured, or sick were often abandoned for dead.

*"If the larger picture of ancient forager life is hard to reconstruct, particular events are largely irretrievable."*

Information on anatomy, diet, and technology is relatively easy to retrieve, but the thoughts, beliefs and experiences of *Homo sapiens* are hidden behind the "curtain of silence" which surrounds the bulk of human history. Did they favor "Animism" (the attribution of a soul to natural phenomena) or "Theism" (belief in a god or multiple gods as creator of the universe)?

### The Flood

*"The wandering bands of storytelling Sapiens were the most important and most destructive force the animal kingdom had ever produced."*

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