21 LIÇÕES PARA O SÉCULO 21

21 LESSONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

João Cláudio Leite de Sá
Dário Rodrigues de Oliveira
José Leonardo Gomes Coelho
Willma José de Santana


The work closes a trilogy. While Sapiens addresses the trajectory of the human race, and Homo Deus, the future, 21 lessons for the 21st century focuses on the present. Harari provides a panoramic view of contemporary man’s concerns, as well as reflections and advice that can guide those who feel unable to understand the complexity of events in a globalized world full of conflicts and technology.

The book in question was released in São Paulo in 2018, translated by Paulo Geiger, published by Companhia das Letras. The 393 pages are distributed in five parts. The first, The technological challenge, contains 4 chapters. The second, The Political Challenge, contains 5. The third, Despair and hope, also 5. The fourth, Truth, 4 chapters. And the last one, Resilience, 3. The book has 21 chapters, one for each lesson.

In Part 1, The Technological Challenge, the author shows how technological advances put at risk the existence of most of the jobs currently common. However, upon listing the advantages and disadvantages of these advances, Harari unveils that it is not worth interrupting the evolution of technology because of the fear of unemployment. These advances will greatly improve the quality of life of people around the world, and even in poor countries in the long term. Schwab explains that nations and businesses must prepare for the future impacts of the technological revolution on the global economy. Developing countries will be the most affected.

Part 2, Political Challenge, addresses the difficulties in the community, the organization of a civilization, global problems, the issue of religion and immigration; due to political problems involving corruption, where politicians divert the money that should be assigned to the population and civil construction, in addition to showing the prejudice found by the population before various religions and immigrations. According to the authors Coutinho and Medeiros Marcelino, these problems will only be diminished/solved when countries invest more in education, because, according to them, education is the key to ending race differences, and consequently, prejudice.

In part 3, Despair and Hope, Harari explains that terrorism is actually a military strategy based on fear and practiced by radical groups that try, with attacks that lead to collective hysteria, to reward their inability to cause great material damage to powerful nations. Peaceful resistance from State heads is the best way to face the situation. Allowing terrorism to affect the rights of immigrants or strike back with great war apparatus can validate the political actions of dictators in the Middle East, for example. For Sait-Pierre, the lack of clarification on the agenda in the public debate favors hate speech and the encouragement of violations of rights, such as torture.

Also in part 3, a chapter focuses on Ignorance, highlighting the arrogance of liberal thought. In this way of thinking, there is the figure of the “rational individual”, who is self-sufficient in rationality and individuality, and who, in the author’s view, does not exist, becoming a utopian being. During this chapter, he seeks to prove the non-existence of this being in various ways, using from comparisons with ancestors of the human race to current experiments, ridiculing the intellectual arrogance of the participants of these experiments, evidencing the existence of a picture of “illusion of knowledge”. Furthermore, Yuval raises the problem that national leaders suffer from the illusion of thought, questioning their discernment, since they are not inserted in reality. Viera corroborates this chapter, arguing that knowledge is not entirely rational. A good portion of his training stems from emotion.

The methodology that Harari uses to build a reasoning of understanding the events in contemporary times is interesting. Numerous times, he rescues historical facts from various eras and related to various civilizations in order to map patterns in human behavior. Nevertheless, he does not fail to consider the differences between the past and now. Therefore, he provides a current and realistic worldview. The imminence of a technological disruption, big data, the new global wave of...
nationalism, global warming, liberalism, culture, immigrant rights and other issues are recurrent in this conversation between author and reader.

With an accessible language, which makes the reading comfortable, the author manages to give cohesion to the text of the book, emphasizing, in the last paragraph of each chapter, a guiding question that introduces the next lesson.

The text was prepared in a simple and clear language, which makes the review even more attractive to readers, in general, being important mainly for young people, because they will still live much of their lives in the 21st century and, despite the title, the work will probably still be current in the 22nd century; for teachers, leaders, and influencers in general, not only because they can help others with their guidance, but also because everyone can benefit from Harari’s advice; for students of the human sciences, as it is a book on human behavior and civilizations; even for people who have different political orientations and worldview from those of the author, because, in addition to enriching the experience of knowing contrary opinions, it is possible to grow intellectually also to see how he thinks and values reason and scientific method. Finally, by simplifying dissemination of information. Thus, it is necessary to have a certain maturity and discernment to absorb, critically interpret and not distort what the author discusses.

Yuval Noah Harari, Ph.D. in history from Oxford University, is currently a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He wrote the winner of the National Library of China’s Wenjin Book Award 2015, Sapiens - A Brief History of Humanity, which was translated into more than 30 languages and was selected for Mark Zuckerberg’s Online Book Club, and the one listed by Time as one of the 10 best nonfiction books of 2017, Homo God - A Brief History of Tomorrow. His other works are The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450-2000 (2008), Special Operations in the Age of Chivalry, 1100-1550 (2007) and Renaissance Military Memoirs: War, History and Identity, 1450-1600 (2004).

REFERENCES

