

Why Harari might not be the best political advisor you can pick

Sarah Spiekermann, October 2022

In its many disguises transhumanism is a heavily funded and globally shared ideology that has sunk into collective consciousness, driving the digital transformation from the top.



Citizen score



Neuralink



"Transhumanist Wager"



Surveillance Capitalism



Peter Thiel, MIRI (Machine Intelligence Research Institute)

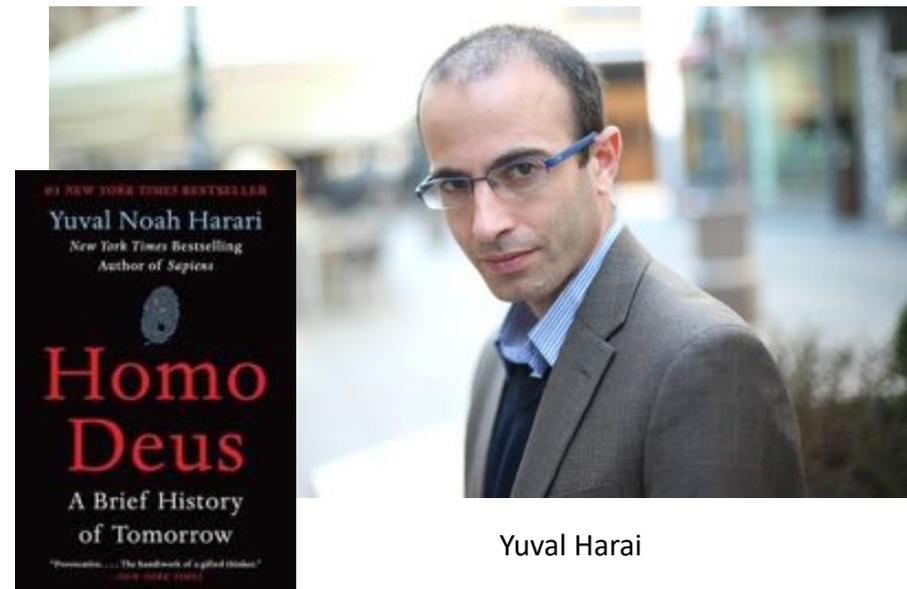


Nick Bostrom
"Superintelligence"

At WU Vienna we conducted a content analysis of Harari's Homo Deus, a milestone for giving the transhumanist ideology mainstream currency.

Method of Analysis of the Book 'Homo Deus' by Harari, which sold over 2 million times and is translated in 40 languages, published in 2015:

- All text passages were chosen for analysis that contain: Artificial intelligence and related technologies (current and future) (b) Analogies and comparisons of technologies with living organisms (c) Influences of technologies on society and individuals
- 286 text passages were selected and coded by 4 coders
- 80% inter-rater reliability



Yuval Harari



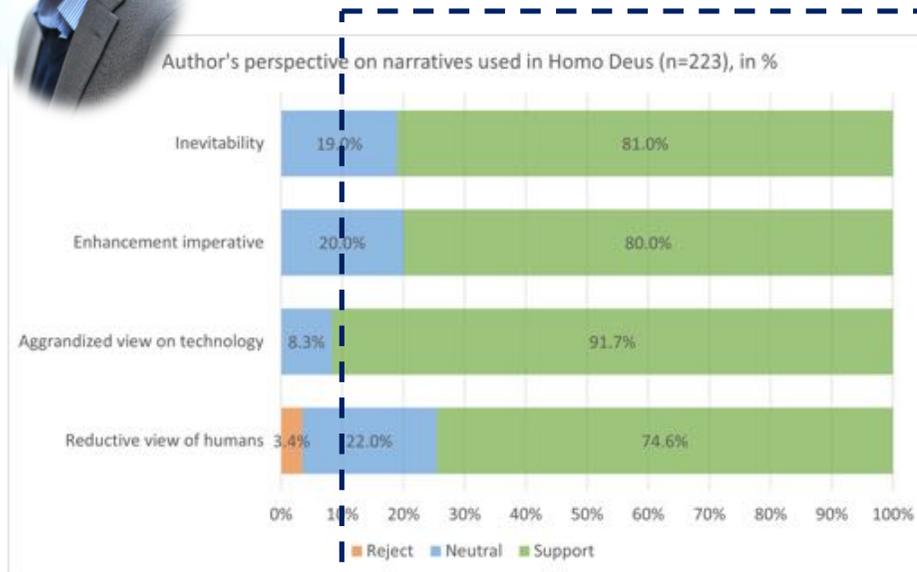
In Homo Deus transhumanism is present in four core dimensions

| | |
|--|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">REDUCTIVE VIEW OF HUMANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans are (biochemical) algorithms, processors, data networks • Humans have deficits compared to machines • Intuition and emotional intelligence are flawed • Biology can be replicated (reverse engineered) • The human body is a container that nourishes the mind/brain | <p style="text-align: center;">INEVITABILITY OF TRANSHUMANISM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human species will be replaced • AI will achieve human-like capabilities • Inevitable evolutionary step • Imperative of progress |
| <p style="text-align: center;">ENHANCEMENT IMPERATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperative (moral obligation) to human enhancement • Advocacy of invasive measures for physical and mental enhancement | <p style="text-align: center;">AGGRENDIZED VIEW OF TECHNOLOGY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Machines are predictable and therefore better than humans • Technology is godlike, superhuman, magic, a next (better) species |

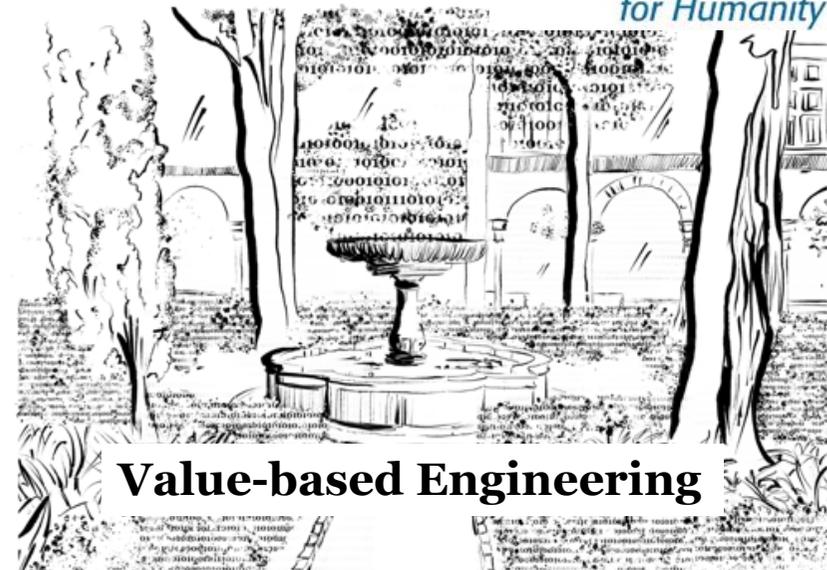
Harari discusses no alternatives than transhumanism despite their existence, such as a value based engineering.



Does Harari buy into the transhumanist story?



Human friendly alternatives exist

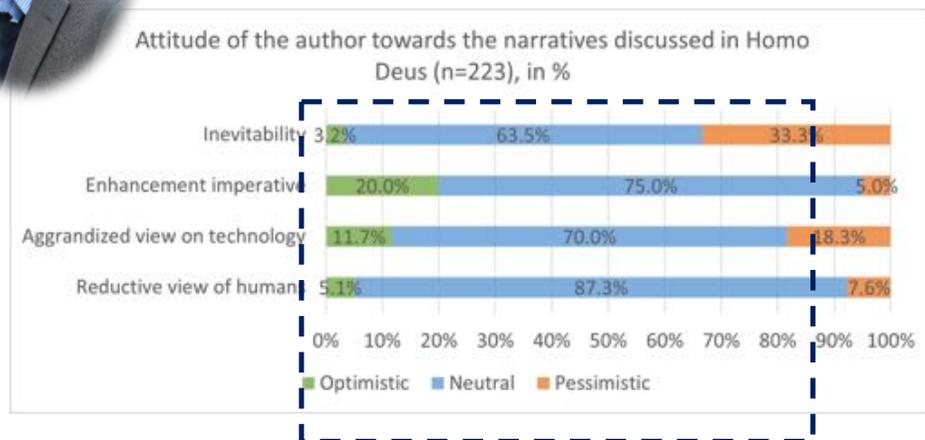


Value-based Engineering

Is an author “evil” who remains neutral vis-à-vis a graceless portrayal of humans and their future?



Emotional attitude of the author when describing the ideology



Enhancement Imperative: “Bioengineering is not going to wait patiently for natural selection to work its magic. Instead, bioengineers will take the old Sapiens body, and intentionally rewrite its genetic code, rewire its brain circuits, alter its biochemical balance, and even grow entirely new limbs. They will thereby **create new godlings**, who might be as different from us Sapiens as we are different from Homo erectus.”

Aggrandized technology: “And having raised humanity above the beastly level of survival struggles, we will now aim to **upgrade humans into gods**, and turn Homo sapiens into Homo deus.” p. 27

Reductive view on humans: “[...] for the last 70,000 years or so, human experiences have been the most efficient data-processing algorithms in the universe, hence there was good reason to sanctify them. However, we may soon reach a point when these algorithms will **be superseded, and even become a burden.**” p. 75

The problem is that many ideas promoted by transhumanism and Harari such as computer anthropology are simply wrong.

Example: Assumptions of Computer Anthropology and their flaws <>*

- body and mind are separable like hardware and software
 - <> the bodily structures ("hardware") are constantly altered by the thought processes
- human identity consists of statically retrievable memory data
 - <> there is no observer perspective in human life
 - <> only the "self" has an identity that observers, but is never static
- the whole biological life process consists of a data or information stream; the idea that a human being is an "information object" and can be modeled as such
 - <> Shannon's "information" definition in computer science is different from humanities where "Information is only what is understood" (p. 351 in (von Weizsäcker 1974))

*Spiekermann, Sarah. 2023. The idea of humankind within digitalization. In *Handbook of Ideas on Humankind*, Hrsg. von Michael Zichy. New York: Springer.

MICROSOFT PATENT AIMS TO REVIVE DEAD PEOPLE AS AI CHAT BOTS

READ THE STORY AT
[LINK IN BIO](#)
LOUDWIRE



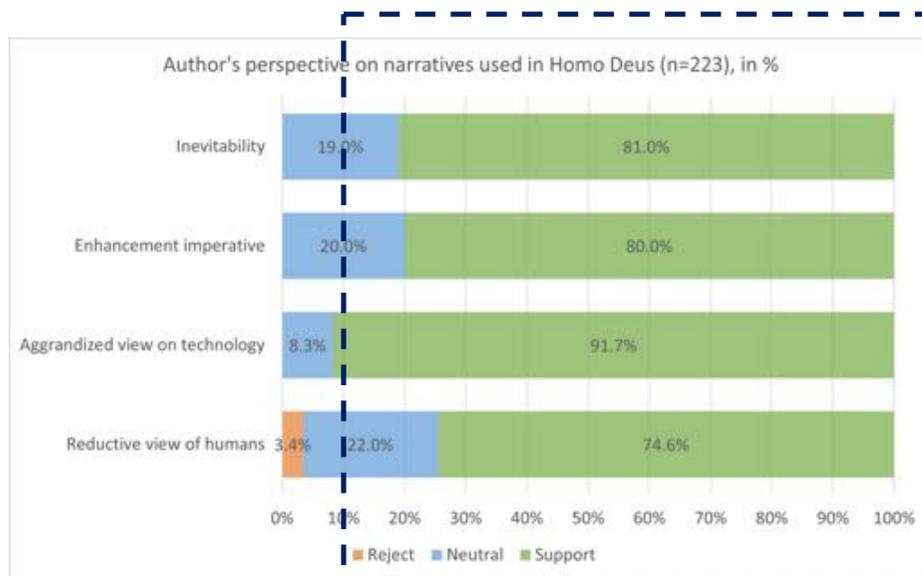
We build a future based on these confusions and aberrations ...



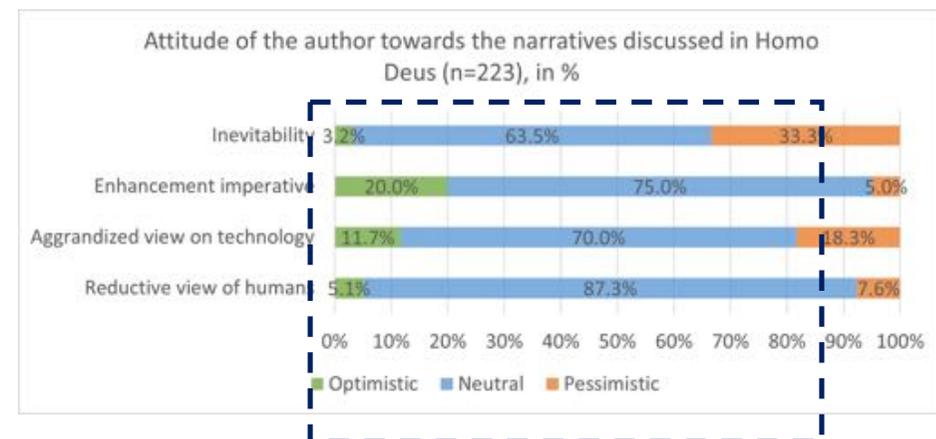
Backup

Harari fully buys into the transhumanist “story” of our future while taking a mostly neutral stance towards it.

The perspective on the author – Does he buy into the transhumanist story?

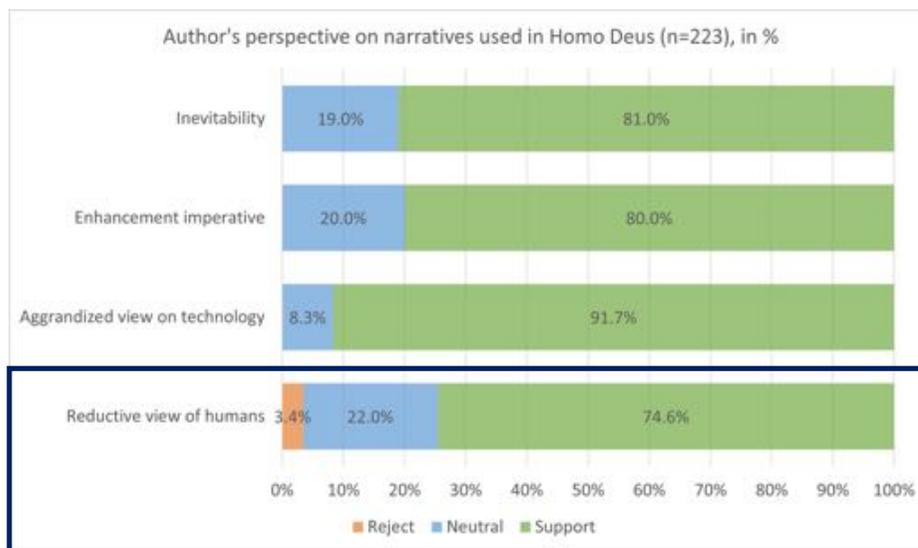


What is the attitude of the author when describing the ideology?

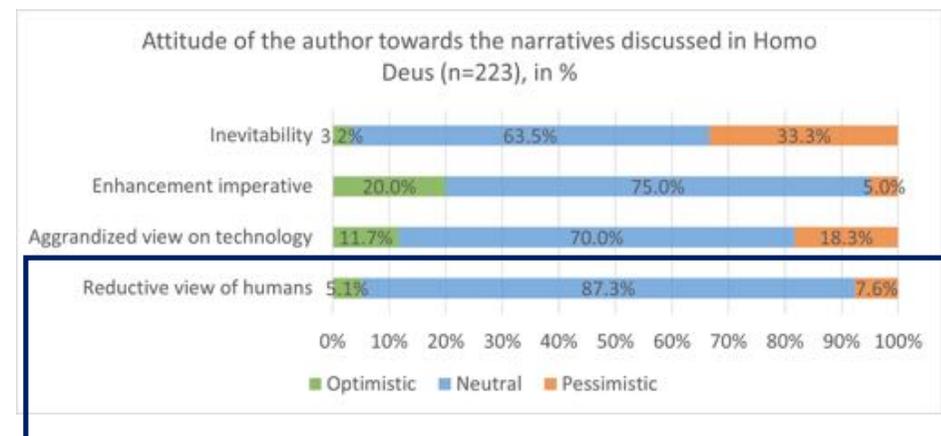


Harari shares the reductive view on humans in 75% of his 118 claims on the matter, holding a neutral attitude (87%).

Is the narrative neutrally reported or is it supported/ rejected by the author?

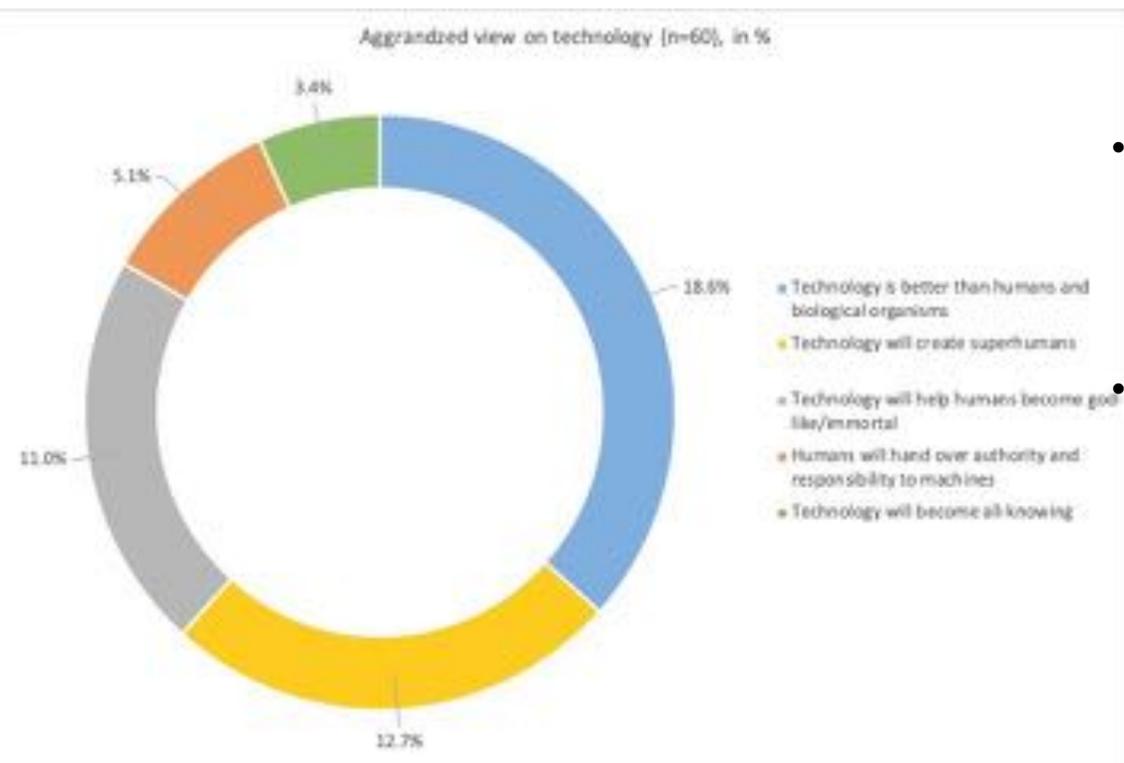


What is the tonality of the selected text?



Harari believes that technology is better than what nature made of us and will turn us into superhumans....

Aggrandized View on Technology

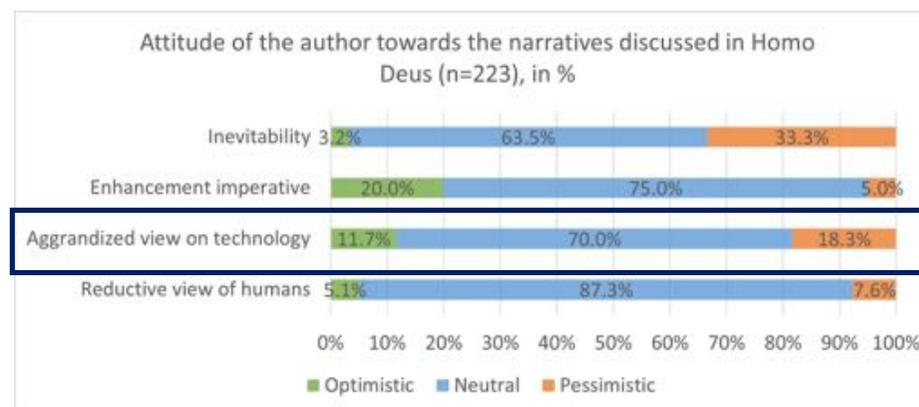
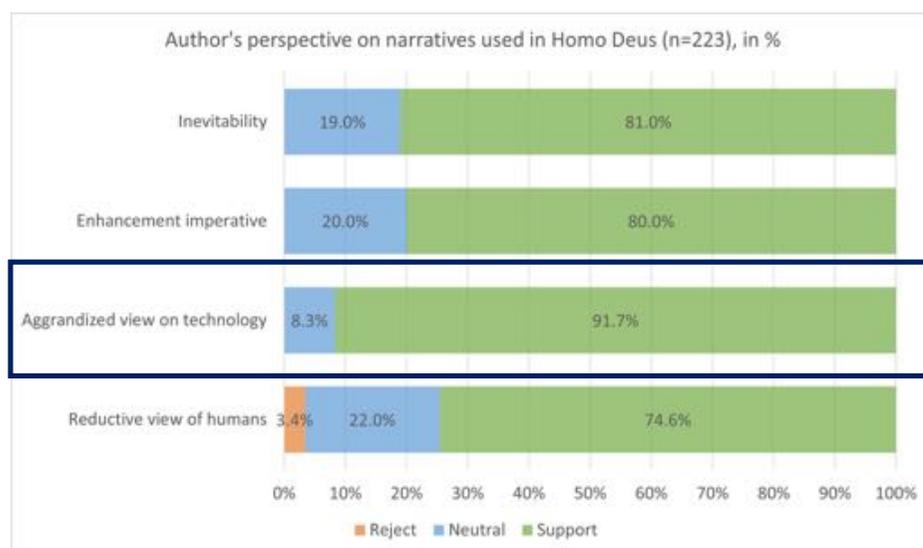


- **Technology will help humans become god-like/immortal:** *“And having raised humanity above the beastly level of survival struggles, we will now aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn Homo sapiens into Homo deus.”* p. 27
- **Technology is better than humans and biological organisms:** *„The seed algorithm may initially be developed by humans, but as it grows, it follows its own path, going where no human has gone before – and where no human can follow.”* p. 375
- **Technology will create superhumans:** *“... , whereas Hitler and his ilk planned to create superhumans by means of selective breeding and ethnic cleansing, twenty-first-century techno-humanism hopes to reach the goal far more peacefully, with the help of genetic engineering, nanotechnology and brain-computer interfaces.”* p. 336

Harari shares the aggrandized view on technology in 92% of his 60 claims on the matter, holding a mostly neutral (70%) or positive attitude (12%) to this view. 18% of claims are sceptical.

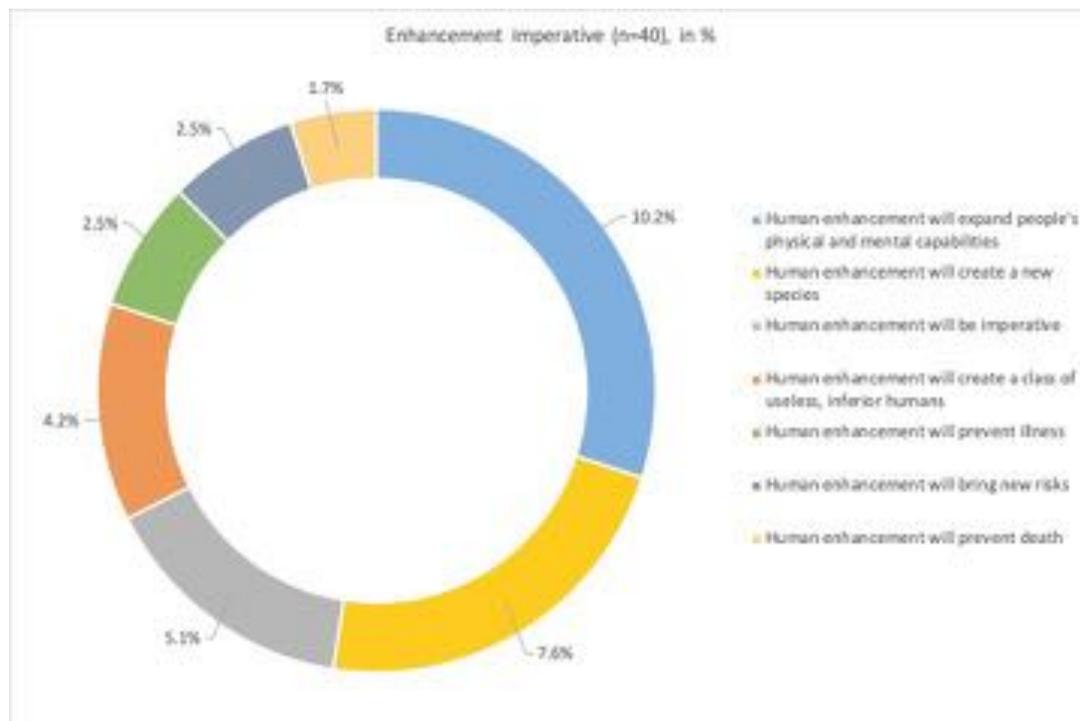
Is the narrative neutrally reported or is it supported/ rejected by the author?

What is the tonality of the selected text?



Harari embraces the enhancement imperative of transhumanism; no alternative future seems plausible.

Enhancement Imperative

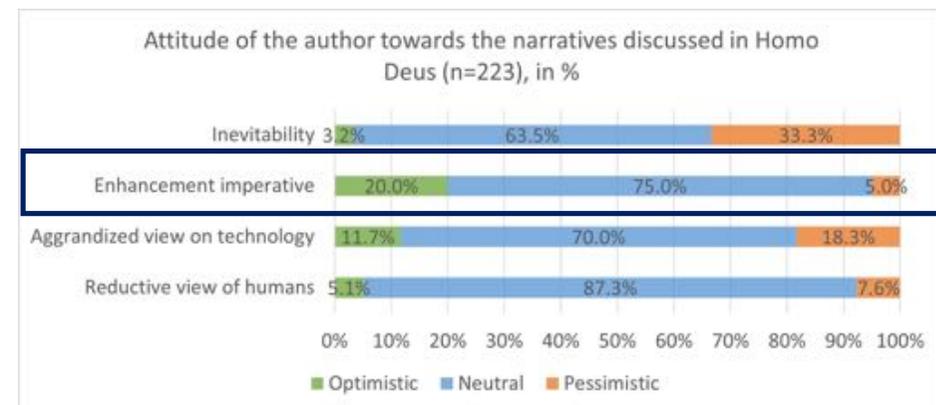
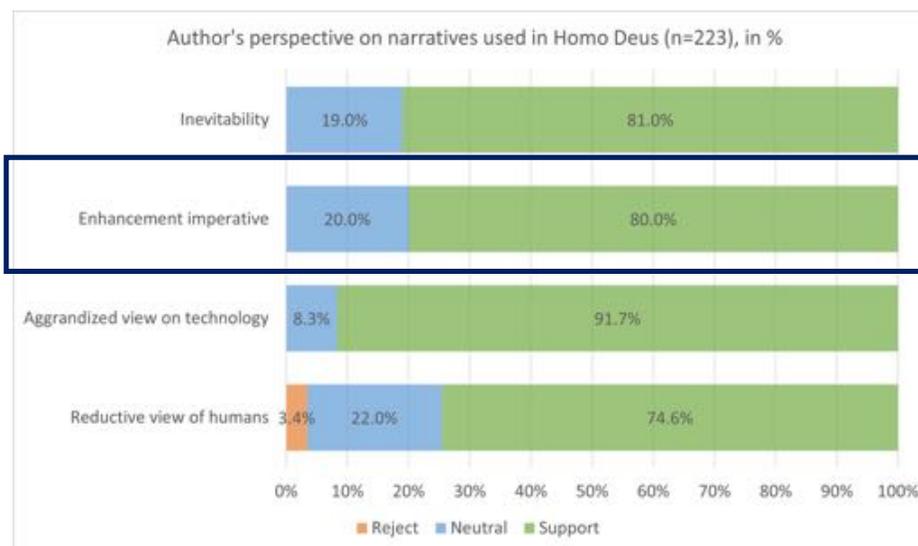


- **Human enhancement will expand people's physical and mental capabilities** "Cyborg engineering will go a step further, merging the organic body with non-organic devices such as bionic hands, artificial eyes, or millions of nano-robots that will navigate our bloodstream, diagnose problems and repair damage. Such a cyborg could enjoy abilities far beyond those of any organic body." p. 48
- **Human enhancement will create a new species:** "Bioengineering is not going to wait patiently for natural selection to work its magic. Instead, bioengineers will take the old Sapiens body, and intentionally rewrite its genetic code, rewire its brain circuits, alter its biochemical balance, and even grow entirely new limbs. They will thereby create new godlings, who might be as different from us Sapiens as we are different from Homo erectus."

Harari shares the enhancement narrative in 80% of his 40 claims on the matter, holding a mostly neutral (75%) or positive attitude (20%) to this view. 5% of claims are sceptical.

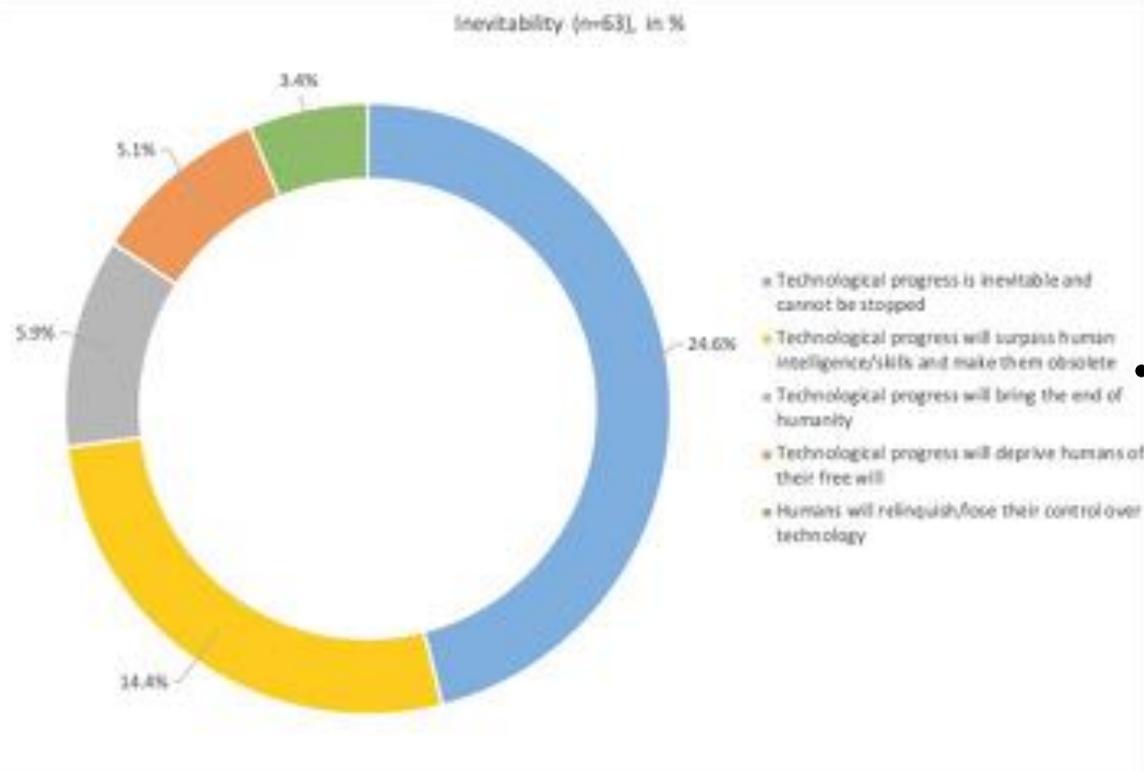
Is the narrative neutrally reported or is it supported/ rejected by the author?

What is the tonality of the selected text?



Harari believes that our transhumanistic future is going to be inevitably transhumanistic.

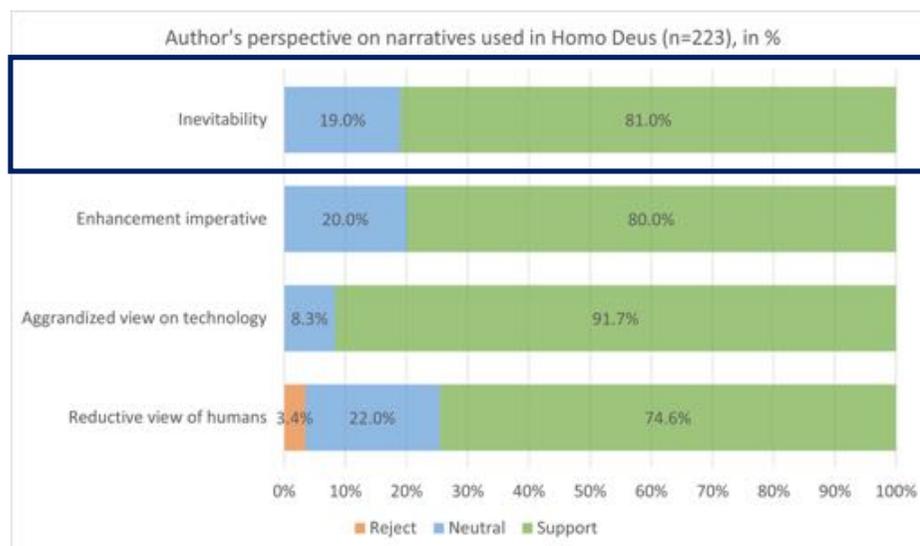
Inevitability of the Transhumanist Future



- **Technological progress will surpass human intelligence/skills and make humans obsolete:** *"When genetic engineering and artificial intelligence reveal their full potential, liberalism, democracy and free markets might become as obsolete as flint knives, tape cassettes, Islam and communism."* p. 268
- **Technological progress is inevitable and cannot be stopped:** *"[...] we are on the brink of a momentous revolution. Humans are in danger of losing their value, because intelligence is decoupling from consciousness."* p. 299

Harari shares in the inevitability narrative in 81% of his 63 claims on the matter, holding a mostly neutral (64%) or negative attitude (33%). 3% of claims are emotionally positive.

Is the narrative neutrally reported or is it supported/ rejected by the author?



What is the tonality of the selected text?

