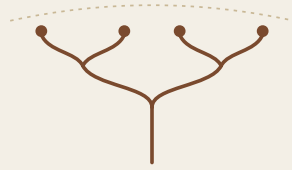


MY OWN READING OF SAPIENS · IN ELEVEN PARTS

SAPIENS

A Brief History of Humankind

Yuval Noah Harari — first published 2011



PART EIGHT OF ELEVEN

The Third Glue, and Why the Winners Won

Chapter 12: The Law of Religion

Chapter 13: The Secret of Success

*“The ideas that took over the world did not win because they were true, or because they were good for us.
They won because they were good at spreading.”*

Chapter 13's conclusion, in my words

READ AND EXPLAINED BY LOVEPREET SINGH

I read the whole book myself. This is what I understood,
written the way I'd explain it to a friend.

Part Seven, in four paragraphs

So this part stands on its own, even if you have not read the last one.

Part Seven covered two of the three glues that stuck the world together.

Money. Barter cannot scale, because both people must want what the other has at the same moment.

Money replaces every-good-against-every-good with everything-against-one-thing. And money is not coins — it is anything people agree represents value, and it has been barley, silver by weight, shells and cigarettes. Silver is not nutritious and paper is not useful. The entire worth is the agreement.

Which makes money **trust**, and explains why forging it was punished as treason: you are not stealing a coin, you are damaging the story everybody's savings are made of. It is also the most tolerant thing we have ever built — it works perfectly between enemies — although the tolerance is indifference rather than respect.

Empire. Rule over many distinct peoples with flexible, expandable borders. It has been the world's default form of government for two and a half thousand years, which makes the nation-state the recent experiment. Empires spread by absorbing people, so almost every culture is imperial sediment. And they are eventually dismantled by the people they educated, using the ideas they exported.

I also said, in Part Seven, where I disagree with him most sharply in the whole book: that "there is no pure culture underneath" is true, and "therefore judging empires is difficult" does not follow from it.

WHERE THIS PART FITS

Chapter 12 is the third glue: religion. He defines it in a way designed to annoy almost everybody, and the annoyance is the point. This chapter is where the book becomes genuinely provocative rather than merely surprising.

Chapter 13 is short and it is the coldest thing in the book. It takes the comfortable assumption that good ideas win because they are good, and removes it.

One warning before we go in. This part deals with living faiths that people hold seriously, including several held by people I know. I am going to explain Harari's argument as clearly as I can, give the strongest case against it, and not pretend an argument is settled when it is not. Where I think he is being clever at the expense of being accurate, I will say so — and he is, more than once, in Chapter 12.

A definition built to annoy you

Notice what is missing from it. That absence is the whole chapter.

Religion is a system of human norms and values founded on a belief in a superhuman order.
Unpack it slowly.

Norms and values means rules about how to live. *Superhuman order* means those rules are claimed to come from somewhere above human choice — not invented by people, not changeable by a vote, not up for negotiation.

Now notice what is not in that definition.

Gods.

WHY HE DEFINES IT THIS WAY

A religion, on this test, does not need a god. It needs a claim that its rules are not merely human preferences.

That is a deliberate move, and it does two things at once.

It lets in systems that clearly behave like religions and have no deity — Buddhism, Jainism, Stoicism, Daoism.

And it lets in something far more provocative, which he holds back until the end of the chapter.

Whether the definition is illuminating or a trick is a fair argument, and I take it up properly in Section Nine.

He adds two more conditions. To be one of the glues holding humankind together, a religion must be:

- **Universal** — claiming its truth applies everywhere, to everyone, always. Not *our god, for our valley*.
- **Missionary** — feeling an obligation to spread that truth to people who do not have it.

Most religions in history were neither. A local god of a local river had no interest in strangers and no wish to be exported. Only a handful became universal and missionary, and those are the ones that helped merge the world.

How farming rearranged the heavens

The best piece of history-writing in the chapter. The economy changed, and the gods reorganised to match.

Go back to Part Three for a moment. Foragers were probably **animists**: everything has a mind — animals, plants, rivers, stones — and crucially there is **no hierarchy**. No separate realm of gods above nature issuing instructions. The bear is a person. The mountain is a person. You negotiate, and sometimes you lose.

Then farming happened, and the relationship changed completely.

Now humans owned plants and animals. You did not negotiate with a sheep. You bred it, penned it, sheared it, and killed it when you decided to. The animist world of rough equals no longer described anything that was actually happening.

So the picture reorganised into a ladder.



And here is why the top floor had to be built. Farmers needed things they could not control and could not negotiate with: rain, fertility, the absence of locusts. A forager who wants a deer goes and looks for a deer. A farmer who wants rain can do absolutely nothing about rain.

So gods stopped being neighbours and became **management** — powers you petition, bargain with, and sacrifice to. Religion became, among other things, an ongoing negotiation about the harvest.

I think this is genuinely excellent, and it is the kind of connection I read history for. The gods did not change because anybody had a revelation. They changed because the economy did.

And polytheism turns out to be tolerant

Polytheism means many gods, each with partial power over a domain — rain, war, fertility, healing, childbirth. Above them, many such systems place a supreme power or principle that is completely indifferent to human affairs. It has no interests, so there is no point praying to it. You pray to the specialists.

Which produces something people rarely expect. **Polytheism is tolerant by its own structure.** If you already believe in many gods, one more is not a threat — it is a new department. Rome absorbed the gods of the peoples it conquered as a matter of routine administration.

Polytheists rarely persecuted anybody for believing the wrong thing. Where they did — as with early Christians in Rome — it was generally about political loyalty and refusal to perform civic rites, not about doctrine.

One god, who cares what you think

A structural claim, not a moral one — and I want to be precise about the difference.

Monotheism means one god, all-powerful, and — this is the part that matters — one who **cares** what you believe.

The first attempt we know of failed. Around 1350 BC the Egyptian pharaoh **Akhenaten** tried to abolish Egypt's gods in favour of one, Aten. It collapsed almost immediately after his death and was thoroughly reversed.

The idea survived instead through Judaism, which was monotheistic but essentially local and non-missionary: one god, one people, no drive to convert the world. Then a small Jewish sect gathered around a preacher named Jesus went in a completely different direction and claimed the message was for everybody. That combination — one universal god, plus an obligation to tell everyone — turned an obscure sect into the largest religion on Earth. Six centuries later Islam did something structurally similar out of Arabia, expanding at extraordinary speed.

THE STRUCTURAL CLAIM

Harari's argument is that **monotheism is intolerant by its own logic**, and I want to be careful about what that does and does not say.

If there is exactly one god and one truth, then other beliefs are not alternatives. They are **errors** — and if the stakes are eternal, they are dangerous errors, and letting them spread is not generosity but negligence.

Polytheism can shrug. Monotheism cannot, without contradicting itself.

He is **not** saying monotheists are worse people. He is saying the belief itself converts disagreement into error, and error into danger, and that this is a property of the structure rather than of anybody's character.

He backs it with a comparison that stopped me.

Over roughly three centuries, the polytheistic Roman Empire's persecutions killed some thousands of Christians. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Christians killed Christians over doctrine on a vastly larger scale. On a single day — **24 August 1572**, the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in France — Catholics killed thousands of Protestants in Paris and in towns across the country.

More Christians died at Christian hands on that one day than in the entire Roman persecution.

WHERE THE EXPERTS ACTUALLY FIGHT — IS MONOTHEISM MORE VIOLENT?

Harari's case. The structure produces it. One truth means every other belief is a dangerous error, and the numbers above are what that looks like when a society takes its own doctrine seriously.

The case against, at full strength. Polytheistic societies conducted plenty of religious persecution and forced conversion — the idea that they were relaxed about belief is partly a modern flattery. Monotheistic empires ran long stretches of relative tolerance for other faiths, often as deliberate policy: Islamic states across several centuries maintained legal frameworks under which Jewish and Christian communities lived and practised, and the Mughal emperor Akbar built explicit religious accommodation into imperial administration in sixteenth-century India. Neither of those is equality by modern standards, and neither is what Harari's structural claim would predict either.

And the massacres are not purely theological. Historians of the French wars of religion point to dynastic struggle, factional politics at court, aristocratic rivalries, urban politics and money doing an enormous amount of the work, with religion supplying the vocabulary and the dividing line. Attributing St Bartholomew's Day to doctrine alone is not what specialists do.

Where it stands. The structural argument is real and it identifies something true about how exclusive-truth claims behave. It is nothing like sufficient on its own, and Harari presents it as though it were.

What would settle it. Nothing clean. You would need to hold politics, economics and dynastic ambition constant across societies and vary only the theology, and history does not run that experiment.

And in practice, monotheism is polytheism wearing a coat

Here is the observation I liked most in the chapter, because it is true of every tradition I have any contact with.

Ordinary religious life in every monotheistic tradition fills up with intermediate figures. Saints. Angels. Prophets. Local holy men. Shrines with specialities.

People pray to the saint of lost things, to the shrine that helps with examinations, to the one that is good for a sick child, to the tomb that has a reputation for money troubles.

Functionally, these are **specialists with domains** — which is exactly what polytheistic gods were. Official doctrine says one god. Actual practice is a crowded field of helpers with particular expertise.

Human beings apparently want somebody specific to talk to about a specific problem, and no theology has ever managed to stop them arranging that.

Two problems, and why no religion is pure

A neat piece of reasoning, and the conclusion is one of my favourite lines in the book.

Dualism is the belief in two opposed cosmic powers, good and evil, locked in struggle. Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, various Gnostic movements.

It exists because monotheism has a problem it has never fully solved.

THE TWO PROBLEMS

Monotheism's problem: where does evil come from?

If god is all-powerful and entirely good, the existence of a child dying of a disease requires an explanation. Every monotheistic tradition has wrestled with this for centuries and none has produced an answer that satisfies everybody, including many of their own believers.

Dualism's answer: evil comes from an independent evil power. Instant, complete, satisfying.

Dualism's problem: where does order come from?

If two hostile powers made the world, why does it obey consistent laws that both of them have to operate inside? Who set the rules of the arena?

Monotheism's answer: one maker, one set of laws. Instant, complete, satisfying.

Each system answers effortlessly the question the other cannot.

So what happens in reality? **Mixture.**

Christianity officially has one god, and also has Satan, and demons, and a cosmic struggle between light and darkness — which is dualist furniture standing in a monotheist house.

Which gives Harari a conclusion I have quoted several times since: real religions are always blends, and **syncretism — the mixing of traditions — might be the single greatest world religion.** Nobody's actual practised faith is doctrinally pure, and the pure version exists mainly in the writing of people whose job is to defend it.

A religion with no gods in it

Harari explains Buddhism as a theory of the mind rather than a faith. That is a choice, and I flag it in Section Nine.

Natural-law religions are value systems based on a claimed law of reality rather than on any deity: Buddhism, Jainism, Daoism, Stoicism, Epicureanism.

His main example is Buddhism, and he presents it almost as psychology.

Around the fifth century BC, Siddhartha Gautama concluded that suffering does not come from bad luck. It comes from the structure of the mind itself.

THE ARGUMENT, STEP BY STEP

The mind is a craving machine. When something unpleasant happens, you crave for it to stop. When something pleasant happens, you crave for it to continue and to intensify.

Both cravings produce dissatisfaction. The first obviously. The second less obviously — because wanting a good thing to last makes you anxious about losing it, and anxious is not content.

So pleasure does not end suffering. Getting what you want does not end it either, because the wanting immediately relocates to something else. You have been doing this your whole life and can check it yourself.

Therefore the problem is not your circumstances. It is the wanting.

The proposed solution: stop craving. Not by acquiring everything, and not by punishing yourself — both of those are still the same machine running. By training the mind to experience what is actually happening without demanding that it be different.

The method is meditation: watching your own sensations closely enough to see a craving arise, and not automatically obeying it.

Somebody who succeeds completely reaches *nirvana*, which means *extinguished* — the fire of craving has gone out.

Notice what is absent. No creator. No commandments. No divine judgement. No afterlife arrangement being offered as an incentive.

Just a claim about how minds work, presented as a law of nature — which is exactly why it fits Harari's definition of religion while looking nothing like the usual picture of one.

And now the move that starts arguments

If a value system rests on a claimed superhuman order, it is a religion. So here is what that lets in.

THE SYSTEM	THE SUPERHUMAN ORDER IT CLAIMS
LIBERALISM	Every individual has inherent rights and freedoms. Not granted by governments — inherent. Where from? Not from a vote.
COMMUNISM	History follows laws that inevitably produce class struggle and eventual revolution. Laws of history, above any individual's choice.
CAPITALISM	Growth through free markets is the path to human wellbeing. Presented as how reality works, not as one option among several.
NATIONALISM	Your nation is a real and enduring thing, to which you owe loyalty and, if required, your life.
NAZISM	Nature's laws demand racial struggle and the forcible improvement of the species.

Each has sacred texts. Founding figures. Heretics and schisms. Martyrs. Rituals, anniversaries, flags and hymns. And each claims its values come from something larger than human preference.

On this definition, the twentieth century was not an age of declining religion. It was an age of **new** religions, several of them murderous.

And the biggest modern one is humanism

Humanism is the worship of humanity itself: what makes a human being sacred is their humanity. It splits into three branches, and Harari's point in grouping them is the payload of the whole chapter.



Liberal humanism says the individual human being is sacred. Individual rights, individual liberty, individual conscience. This is the dominant faith of most democracies, and of most readers of this book, including probably you and certainly me.

Socialist humanism says the human *species* is sacred, so equality matters more than individual liberty. Inequality is the fundamental offence.

Evolutionary humanism is the Nazi version. Humanity is not fixed but evolving; some humans are further along than others; the species must therefore be improved, by force if necessary. This is what you get when you take *humanity is sacred* and add a hierarchy of humans.

Harari's point in putting them side by side is that the wars of the last century were not a battle between religion and reason. They were a battle between **three religions arguing about what exactly is holy in a person**.

Whatever you think of the definition — and I have problems with it — that reframing is worth the chapter.

Everything looks inevitable afterwards

A short chapter that quietly detonates most of what you thought history was.

Start with a trap your brain falls into automatically.

A WORD YOU WILL NEED — THE HINDSIGHT FALLACY

The hindsight fallacy: once something has happened, it looks as though it was always going to happen.

Your brain does this without being asked. It takes the ending it knows, searches backwards for causes that fit, finds them, and files everything that pointed elsewhere in the bin.

Why it matters: every history book does this, including this one. So does every story you tell about your own life. The tidiness is manufactured, and it is manufactured backwards.

Harari's example is Christianity, and it is a good one.

Go to the year 306 AD. Constantine has just become emperor of Rome. Christians are a minority sect — estimates vary and are contested, but a small fraction of the empire — worshipping a Jewish preacher the Roman state had executed as a criminal about three centuries earlier.

Now imagine standing in a Roman forum and announcing that within a few decades this sect will be the official religion of the entire empire, and that seventeen centuries later it will be the largest religion on the planet.

You would not have been disagreed with. You would have been laughed at. Harari's comparison is that the reaction would be roughly what you would get today by announcing that Hare Krishna will be the state religion of the United States by 2060.

And yet by 380 AD Christianity was Rome's official religion.

Nothing about it was inevitable. It was one contingent thing after another — an emperor's political calculation, local circumstances, a network of unusually committed believers, and a great deal of luck.

But look at how it gets taught. The rise of Christianity arrives as a story with an arc: the old gods were exhausted, people hungered for something new, the message answered a need. Everything lines up neatly, pointing at the outcome we already know.

That neatness was assembled after the fact, from the ending.

The priest with no children

The coldest idea in the book, and the cleanest single proof of it.

Now the payload of the chapter.

We assume the ideas that win, win for good reasons. That successful religions answered real needs.

That successful economic systems made people better off. That there is some rough justice in cultural survival.

Harari says no. **There is no proof that cultures beneficial to humans must inexorably succeed.**

To make it concrete he uses the idea of cultural evolution: treat ideas as things that copy themselves from mind to mind, competing for attention, mutating as they go. The usual word is **meme** — a unit of culture that spreads the way a gene spreads.

A WORD YOU WILL NEED — MEME

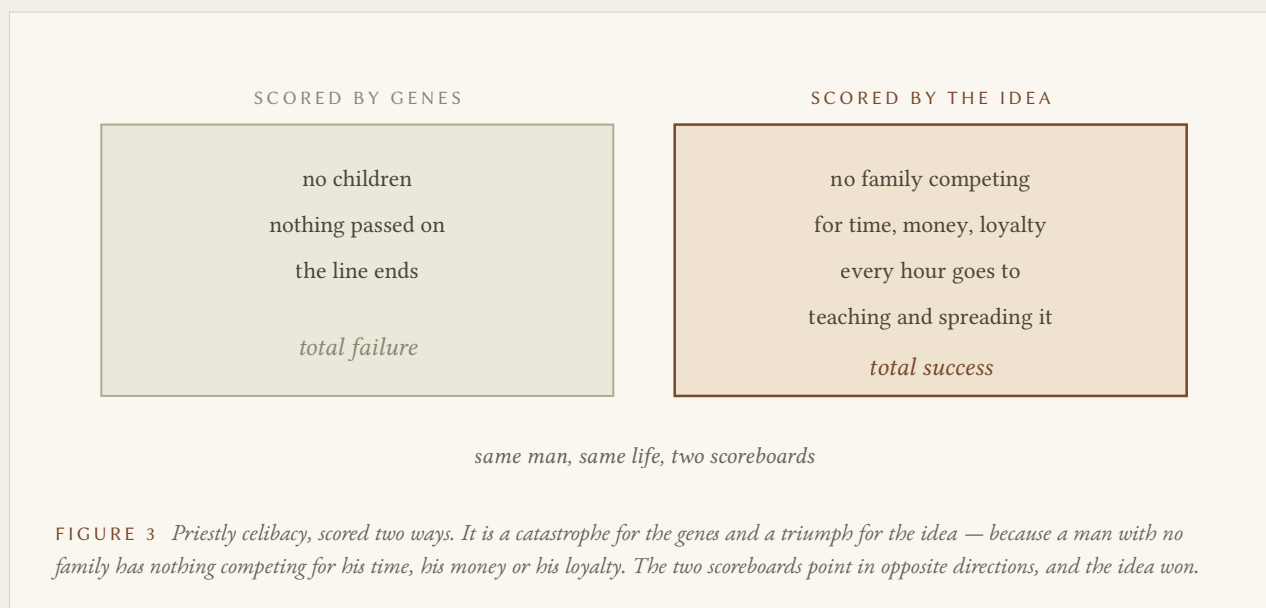
Meme: an idea, behaviour or practice that copies itself from one mind to another. The word was coined by the biologist Richard Dawkins as a deliberate parallel to *gene*.

The crucial property of anything that copies itself is this: it is selected for **being good at copying**, not for being good for whatever is carrying it.

A cold virus is not trying to help you. It does not need to help you. It only needs to make you sneeze near somebody else.

Why it matters: apply that to ideas and the question you ask about any dominant belief changes completely. Not *why is this true?* but *what makes this so good at travelling?*

And here is the example that makes the whole thing click, and it is beautiful.



From the point of view of genes, celibacy is a catastrophe. A man who has no children passes on nothing. Any tendency towards it should vanish within a generation or two.

From the point of view of the **idea**, celibacy is brilliant. A celibate priest has no wife and no children competing for his time, his money, his attention or his loyalty. Every resource he has — his entire life — goes into teaching, converting, administering and spreading the belief.

The idea sacrifices its host's reproduction in exchange for enormously increased transmission of itself.

So a practice that is terrible for genes can be excellent for memes. And the memes are what shaped two thousand years of European history.

Once you have seen this you cannot stop seeing it. Consumerism does not survive because it makes people happy. Outrage does not spread online because it is true. Neither of those things needs to be good for you. They need to be good at travelling.

THE THING NOBODY QUESTIONS

The meme framework — Harari's, Dawkins's, and everybody who has used it since — assumes that **ideas are the units that get selected**.

Look at what actually persists over centuries and it is rarely a bare idea. It is an **institution**: a body with buildings, land, revenue, a hierarchy, a training system and a legal existence.

The Church did not survive for two millennia because the idea was contagious. It survived because it owned property, trained its own replacements, kept written records, adjudicated marriages, collected revenue and had a chain of command — and the idea travelled inside all of that, the way a passenger travels inside a ship.

That matters, because the two explanations predict different things. If ideas are the replicators, you fight a bad idea by arguing with it. If institutions are the replicators, arguing with the idea is close to irrelevant, and what determines the outcome is who holds the buildings, the money and the training of the next generation.

Harari uses the celibacy example brilliantly and never notices that his own example is not a free-floating thought at all. It is an **office** — a role inside an institution, with rules, a hierarchy and a training system attached.

Where I think he is wrong in these two chapters

Chapter 13 is close to bulletproof. Chapter 12 buys a striking argument at a real price.

1. The definition of religion is a trick that costs him a word

Defining religion broadly enough to include communism is a known move with a known problem: stretch the word far enough and it stops distinguishing anything.

If any system with sacred values and a claimed authority above human preference counts, then football fandom starts to qualify, and so does a serious commitment to vegetarianism, and so does the professional culture of medicine.

Many scholars of religion argue that ritual, the sacred, and specific claims about supernatural agency do real analytical work that his definition erases. He gains a striking argument at the cost of a useful word, and I do not think the trade is worth it.

THE THING NOBODY QUESTIONS — THE SECOND ONE

Underneath the whole "communism is a religion" argument is a step nobody states: **that if two things share a structure, they are the same kind of thing.**

Communism has texts, founders, heretics, martyrs and rituals. So does Catholicism. Therefore, the argument runs, they are both religions.

But sharing a structure is not the same as sharing a nature. A company has a founder, a mission statement, an induction ritual, an internal orthodoxy and people who get excommunicated for disagreeing. Nobody thinks a company is a religion, and pointing at the structural resemblance does not make it one.

Structural similarity is a **finding that needs explaining**, not an identity claim. The interesting question is why human institutions of every kind converge on this shape — and that question is more interesting than Harari's answer, which is to relabel everything and move on.

2. The polytheism–monotheism contrast is too tidy

Covered at full strength in the argument box in Section Three, so briefly: polytheistic societies persecuted, monotheistic empires ran long stretches of deliberate accommodation, and the massacres he cites had enormous political and factional causes that he does not mention.

The structural insight is real. The historical case for it is presented far more cleanly than the evidence allows.

3. His Buddhism is a modern reading presented as the thing itself

This one bothers me, because it is exactly the move he criticises in others.

The Buddhism in this chapter is clean, philosophical, meditation-centred and essentially psychological. That version genuinely exists, and it is the version most Western readers encounter.

Actual Buddhist traditions across Asia are full of ritual, devotional practice, elaborate cosmology, supernatural beings, merit-making, relics and prayer for worldly outcomes. Hundreds of millions of practising Buddhists would not recognise the description in this chapter as an account of what they do. Harari picks the reformed, rationalised version because it fits his argument that a religion can have no gods. That is a selection, and he does not tell you he has made it.

4. Chapter 13 is where he is strongest — and where he undoes Part Six

The hindsight fallacy is real, well-explained and genuinely useful. The celibacy example is one of the best things in the book. And *ideas are selected for contagiousness, not for being good for us* is the single most important corrective in the entire work.

But notice what it does to Chapter 9.

In Part Six, Harari argued history has a clear direction, towards unity. Here he argues history is contingent, undirected, chaotic and unpredictable in principle, with nothing selecting for anything except spreadability. Both arguments are good. They cannot both be doing the work he asks of them, and he never reconciles them. I flagged this in Part Six and it is worse here, because Chapter 13 does not merely differ from Chapter 9 — it removes the ground Chapter 9 was standing on.

WORTH REMEMBERING

Religion, on his definition, is any system of values claiming authority above human choice — which lets in Buddhism, and also communism and liberalism. That inclusion is the whole point, and it costs him a useful word.

Farming rearranged the heavens. Once we owned animals we stopped treating them as persons, and once we needed rain we could not control, we needed somebody above us to ask. Both new floors were built by the economy.

Polytheism can absorb one more god. Monotheism structurally cannot — though the historical record is far messier than that clean claim suggests, in both directions.

Every real religion is a mixture, because monotheism explains order and struggles with evil, and dualism does the exact reverse. Syncretism is the actual condition of belief everywhere.

And the ideas that won did not win because they were good for us. The celibate priest is the proof: a catastrophe for his genes, a triumph for the idea he carried. What survives is what copies well, and nothing in that process is checking on you.

Words from this part

Everything I stopped to explain, gathered up.

WORD	WHAT IT MEANS
SUPERHUMAN ORDER	Rules claimed to come from above human choice — not invented by people, not changeable by a vote. The core of Harari's definition of religion.
UNIVERSAL RELIGION	One claiming its truth applies to everyone, everywhere.
MISSIONARY RELIGION	One that feels an obligation to spread that truth.
POLYTHEISM	Many gods, each with partial power over a domain. Tolerant by structure, because one more is not a threat.
MONOTHEISM	One god, all-powerful, who cares what you believe. Intolerant by structure, for the same reason.
DUALISM	Two opposed cosmic powers, good and evil. Explains evil easily and order badly.
SYNCRETISM	The mixing of religious traditions. In practice, the universal condition of belief.
NATURAL-LAW RELIGION	A value system resting on a claimed law of reality rather than a deity. Buddhism, Stoicism, Daoism.
NIRVANA	Literally <i>extinguished</i> . The state in which craving has gone out.
HUMANISM	The worship of humanity itself. Three branches: liberal, socialist, evolutionary.
HINDSIGHT FALLACY	The illusion that whatever happened was bound to happen, because the explanation is built backwards from the ending.
MEME	An idea that copies itself from mind to mind. Selected for spreading well, not for being good for its carrier.

The timeline so far

Carried forward, with these two chapters added.

WHEN	WHAT
c. 1350 BC	Akhenaten's monotheism in Egypt. It collapses after his death.
5th century BC	Siddhartha Gautama. A religion built on a claim about the mind rather than on gods.

WHEN	WHAT
306 AD	Constantine becomes emperor. Christianity is still a small minority sect.
380 AD	Christianity is the official religion of the Roman Empire.
7th century AD	Islam expands out of Arabia at extraordinary speed.
1572	St Bartholomew's Day. More Christians die at Christian hands in one day than in the whole Roman persecution.
c. 1500 AD	The Scientific Revolution begins — with an admission. Part 9 starts here.
20th century	Three branches of humanism fight it out across the world.

Part Nine

Chapter 14: The Discovery of Ignorance · Chapter 15: The Marriage of Science and Empire

Part Four of the book, and the last five hundred years. This is where humanity acquires powers that would have been called magic, and Harari's explanation for how is not what I expected.

Chapter 14 argues that modern science began not with a discovery but with an **admission**: we do not know. Before that, every great tradition of knowledge assumed everything important was already known and written down somewhere, so anything the texts did not mention was not unknown — it was unimportant. The best image in the book is about maps: medieval ones filled every gap with monsters and paradise, and from around 1500 European maps started leaving **blank spaces**. That blank space is the whole revolution, and it is not passive. It is an invitation, and people sailed into it.

Chapter 15 asks the question that follows. In 1500, Europe was a cold, fragmented backwater on the western edge of Eurasia, and China, the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Mughals were all richer or stronger. By 1850, Europeans ran most of the planet. What changed?

Here is what Part Nine takes on:

- Why "we do not know" was a genuinely radical thing to say, and what it replaced
- How two Scottish churchmen calculating widows' pensions in 1744 laid the foundation of the modern insurance industry
- Why science does not fund itself, and what that means for which questions get asked
- Zheng He's enormous fleets, and why China stopped while Europe did not
- Why two continents are named after the man who admitted he did not know what he had found
- And the most uncomfortable idea in the part: the same voyages that measured the transit of Venus opened continents to conquest, and the same institutions that decoded hieroglyphics manufactured scientific racism



End of Part Eight of Eleven · The Third Glue, and Why the Winners Won

My own reading of *Sapiens* — Lovepreet Singh

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, Yuval Noah Harari, 2011