

# **CAPITALISM AND MODERN SOCIETY IN THE HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT OF Y.N. HARARI**

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Among the wide variety of works devoted to the problem of the development of human civilization, the main stages of its evolution, the current state and forecasts for the future, the works of the Israeli historian, professor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yuval Noah Harari, are gaining significant popularity. Partly because his books are written in simple language, and perform the task of acquainting as many people as possible with the author's ideas. The manner of presentation and, in some points, the lack of evidence base, lead to an underestimation by the world scientific community of the main provisions of the Harari concept. However, in our opinion, the interpretation of the historical process of human development, proposed by the author of "Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind" deserves close attention, since it sheds light on many moments of the modern world, its internal interconnections and relationships, which are fundamental for understanding the modern world and its prospects for the future.

In this article, we would like to consider the concept of Harari, outlined in his book "Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind" (2011), concerning the formation of modern society in the process of interaction of three fundamental forces: science, economy and capitalism. A modern culture, which can rightfully be considered a global world culture, has been formed due to the interweaving and mutual influence of these forces, according to Harari. Therefore, the analysis of Harari's ideas seems to us very relevant, both in the context of understanding of the world culture and the world community, and in the context of understanding the processes taking place in Ukrainian society.

The purpose of the article is to consider Harari's ideas regarding the interaction of science, economics and ideology, which resulted in modern civilization; philosophical understanding of the views of Harari.

Harari begins his book by highlighting three fundamental moments in the history of humankind, namely, three revolutions that determined the development of our species. "It started with a cognitive revolution, 70 thousand years ago. The agrarian revolution, which took place 12 thousand years ago, significantly accelerated progress. The scientific revolution – it is only 500 years old – is quite capable of putting an end to history and laying the foundation for something different, unprecedented", – Harari writes (Harari, p.9-10).

The cognitive revolution gradually led to the fact that the species "Homo Sapiens" became the only one on the Earth. In fact, due to the cognitive changes during of this historical period, a person became what he/she is today. The basic qualities were formed, without which modern civilization is impossible. People learned to use the language, and, most importantly, to use it not only to convey information about the world around them, but also to discuss the "world of people", the relationship between each other, to make common plans, and, as a result, common myths, that made possible to unite a huge number of people, to build their interaction. This phenomenon, from the point of view of Harari, formed the basis of modern civilization. People are united by intersubjective reality, which, on the one hand, does not exist in the material world, but, on the other hand, differs from subjective attitudes and fictions. Intersubjective reality is real as long as a certain number of people "believe" in it

(Harari, p. 43). Due to this phenomenon such structures as science, ideology, economics, religion, etc. are possible. And due to these structures that European civilization was able to reach an unprecedented level of development and, moreover, spread its influence throughout the world.

These are the effects of the cognitive revolution for humanity. The next revolution, the agrarian one, also radically changed the vector of development of civilization. The agrarian revolution was the first economic victory of humankind, which ultimately significantly influenced the development of culture and society as a whole. However, Harari has a slightly different opinion. Perhaps from the point of view of the human species, the agrarian revolution was a very positive development. “Homo Sapiens” spread throughout the planet, was able to give birth to a culture that has reached a fairly high level, but he had to sacrifice the well-being of an individual. “The Agrarian Revolution is the greatest scam in history,” – writes Harari (Harari, p. 98). He believes that it was not man “tamed” the wheat, but the wheat “tamed” man, made him sacrifice his health and well-being, completely change his lifestyle, adapting to the needs of agricultural crops. As a result, a particular person began to live worse than before: doing work for which his/her body was not adapted, to eat worse, to get sick more. However, since the process of transition to an agrarian society was very long, people did not immediately notice what was happening, and when they noticed, it was already impossible to change anything.

Nevertheless, the agrarian revolution laid in the consciousness of mankind another component, without which modern civilization would be impossible – “gave the future an unprecedented significance. The farmer is forced to constantly think about the future and work for it” (Harari, p. 122). Striving for the future lies at the heart of scientific research and capitalist ideology, shaping the modern world.

Having considered the main events of human civilization, Harari proceeds to reason about what processes, systems and their interactions have created the modern world that has been formed in the last 500 years. “In the first millennium BC,” – writes Harari, – “three potential world orders were formed, allowing for the first time to see the world and the entire human race as something unified, subject to a common set of rules. The first such order was the economic one: everyone was united by money. The second is political: empires were formed. The third is religious: world religions emerged – Buddhism, Christianity, Islam” (Harari, p. 207-208). And since the scientific revolution, a scientific and technological system has been added to these components, which, in an unprecedented interweaving with economics and ideology, has given rise to the modern capitalist world.

Money, from the point of view of Harari, in the context of the development of civilization, can be considered not so much as a material reality, but also as a psychological phenomenon. It was in this manifestation that they played an outstanding role in the construction of modern culture. Money is the highest form of trust and tolerance. Along with collective myths, money has become the factor that has allowed many people to unite, overcoming countless differences in views and traditions. Money formed the basis of the global trust system, but the negative factor, according to Harari, is the fact that trust based on money is trust in money, not in people (Harari, p. 207-208). This feature should be taken into account if we want to comprehend modern capitalist culture.

“And then the scientific revolution broke out, and the idea of progress appeared. The essence of the idea is this: if you admit your ignorance and invest in research, things will go well. The idea quickly acquired economic expression. People who believed in progress also believed that geographical discoveries, technical inventions, and the development of ties would increase the total amount of production, trade and wealth” (Harari, p. 367).

Prior to this, wealth was seen more as a vice. People were confident that the amount of material wealth is constant, or even gradually decreases. Hence the understanding that if someone has more material wealth, then someone is deprived. Naturally, most religions have sought to eliminate this injustice.

In the era of scientific progress, everything has changed. Science has proven its ability to practically endless knowledge, and technology – to practically endless improvement. This gave humanity a basis to believe in progress, to believe that current problems will be solved in the future: new resources, new medicines, new technologies, etc. will be found. This means that material goods are

no longer limited in volume. The worldview of the modern era is already based on this postulate. The economy has been growing continuously over the past 500 years.

Thus, modern capitalism is based on mutual faith and mutual benefit between science and economics. The economy needs more and more resources, and science says that the only problem in obtaining them is our ignorance. As soon as a scientific discovery is made, it entails the emergence of new technologies, which in turn lead to an increase in material wealth. However, this process is not one-sided. As long as science remained the activity of a few individuals who have practically no social and financial support, there have been no significant changes in the development of civilization. But, as soon as humankind realized the practical benefits of scientific discoveries, investments came to science. Moreover, it turned out that science is a very expensive project. The more value we want to get, the more money needs to be invested.

However, the union of science and economics still cannot be considered exhaustive from the point of view of understanding the modern world. If at the dawn of its emergence science acted as a free creative search, and the direction of this search did not depend on anything, then during the period of the scientific revolution everything changed. Science ceased to exist for itself, and began to exist as a tool that humanity uses to achieve any goals. Naturally, some elements of freedom are inherent in science to this day, but someone must set a vector for its development and decide, in the end, what to pay for. “Science cannot set priorities for itself. Nor is it able to decide how to dispose of its findings”, – writes Harari (Harari, p. 324). Such decisions are made from the outside, namely, within the framework of one or another ideological or political system. Naturally, different ideologies will solve the problem of scientific priorities, the problem of financing science in different ways, and as a result, they will come to different results. Therefore, the ideological factor is also one of the elements of the modern world order, along with the economic and scientific.

In addition, both economics and science have learned to look to the future, to believe in progress and to count on the fact that things will be better in the future than they are now. In turn, this phenomenon belongs to the sphere of intersubjective reality, the abilities which appeared in people mind during the cognitive revolution, and with the help of which people are able to unite, create global structures and simulate the further development of events.

Belief in the future has allowed the economy to make full use of such a mechanism as credit. The credit was used before; however, if we assume that the future is likely to be poorer than the present, then the credit seems to be practically meaningless. Therefore, the belief in progress has had a significant impact on the economy. “People agreed to express imaginary objects, which at the moment do not yet exist, with a special type of money – “credit”. Credit gives us the opportunity to build the present at the expense of the future, based on the assumption that in the future we will certainly have much more resources than in the present. When they began to do something in the present, attracting the income of the future, many new, unprecedented opportunities opened up” (Harari, p. 365).

Thus, “capitalism and science are closely intertwined”, – says Harari. – The European “conquest of the world” was financed by credit, not taxes, and the process was controlled by capitalists, whose main task was to get the maximum return on their investments” (Harari, p. 373-374).

The market and the state come to the fore in the modern world. They acquire unprecedented opportunities and powers. However, in the process of realizing their mechanisms, they are faced with an unexpected obstacle – family and community. For thousands of years, human life has flowed mainly within these structures. Family and community had a huge impact on a person, played a decisive role in his/her life. All economic, educational, medical and spiritual needs were met within the family and community. For a long time, the state was content with secondary roles, since, in fact, it could not offer a person anything particularly significant.

Everything changed in the era of capitalism. Now the state and the market can, in fact, replace the family. They generate and cultivate a new worldview, which is called individualism. In the modern era, a person is quite capable of living, relying on the structures that society offers to him/her, and no longer needs the support of his/her close environment. Hence follows a radical change in attitudes towards the institution of family and kinship. It is given a place only for the emotional filling of life.

However, extreme individualism leads a person to a feeling of uselessness, loneliness and helplessness in front of the soulless machine of the market and the state. For centuries, man has existed

as a social being and now needs the support of a close community. Faced with such a problem, “markets and states instead grow imaginary communities” of millions of strangers <...> Two most important examples of such communities are the nation and consumers” (Harari, p. 428-429). Harari comes to quite provocative conclusions in the process of considering these structures. A modern person perceives his/her world as a given and natural habitat, without thinking about the fact that in fact, a nation, for example, which he/she is used to perceive as something real, and, most importantly, significant for his/her life, is just an artificial construct that is cultivated by capitalist ideology, with the aim of organizing such a society that will best meet the objectives of this ideology.

Summing up, we can say that the work of Harari “Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind” is an unique work. The author managed to combine the historical, philosophical and economic approaches to the analysis of the development of human civilization. Harari shows how the modern world was formed, and presents history in a completely unexpected way, namely, demonstrates the relationship of such seemingly distant phenomena as science and economics. Following Harari, you come to understand that the capitalist system, which has developed as the basis of the modern world, is based on a specific worldview that was inherent in European culture, and was expressed in the desire to search for new knowledge and new opportunities, in the desire to master and subjugate the world around, in the recognition of their ignorance and belief in the possibility of finding the truth, belief that the future will bring new opportunities and qualitative changes.

This kind of value attitudes turned out to be important not only for science, but also for the economy. Armed with a belief in progress and the technological results of scientific activity, the economy has reached unprecedented proportions. As a result, having united with ideology, science and economics gave birth to the modern capitalist world, which, in turn, brought about global changes in the world outlook.

The capitalist world was finally able to give a person social freedom, and, in principle, the feeling of himself/herself as a separate independent person. However, breaking away from family structures, a person faced a number of new problems, which are now also accepted to be solved not in the family circle, but with the help of imaginary structures.

Perhaps, the modern era, based on the views of Harari, can be considered the result of the development of such an ability of human consciousness as imagination.

Imagination allowed primitive people to overcome the natural boundaries of social ties and learn how to build communities of all sizes. States, nations, corporations and much more, that which is the foundation of the modern world, belongs to this type of community. Imagination made it possible to predict the future and make certain plans. Having learned to trust the future, science and economics began to develop at an unprecedented pace. In this sense, we can say that modern culture is the culture of the “future”.

Thus, the historical and philosophical concept of Harari allows for a new look and comprehension of the principles of the formation of modern civilization, its value attitudes; understand the main contradictions and problems of capitalist society, see their source and, possibly, outline ways to solve them; suggest vectors for the further development of human civilization.

## References

1. Harari Y.N. (2018). Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind. Moscow. Sindbad.