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Future Evolution Postprint in the Era of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

From ancient apes to modern humans, from small tribes to megacities, and from barter systems to virtual currencies, humanity, society, and commerce have never ceased their evolutionary march. Today, as mobile internet, the Internet of Things, big data, blockchain, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and nanotechnology emerge in rapid succession, an intelligence revolution led by big data and AI is quietly unfolding, bringing humanity, society, and business to yet another...

Full Text

The Future Evolution in the Age of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence

From ancient apes to modern humans, from small tribes to megacities, and from barter systems to virtual currencies, humanity, society, and commerce have never ceased their evolutionary march. Today, as mobile internet, the Internet of Things, big data, blockchain, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and nanotechnology emerge in rapid succession, an intelligence revolution led by big data and AI is quietly unfolding, bringing humanity, society, and business to yet another inflection point of evolution.

AI and the Future of Humanity

Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, argues that humanity stands on the eve of a monumental transformation. For four billion years, life has evolved according to fundamental natural laws, with all living forms changing within the organic realm. Now, for the first time, humans can alter this pattern of life itself, entering an inorganic domain of intelligent manufacturing and design. Harari posits that in the future, 99% of people may belong to a “useless class” whose characteristics and capabilities become superfluous, while

the remaining 1% become god-like beings who control algorithms and conquer death through biotechnology, emerging as the rulers and drivers of humanity's future evolution.

As big data accumulates and computational power advances rapidly, humans may increasingly cede decision-making authority to unconscious algorithms, allowing them to determine what to purchase, what medical treatments to accept, and whom to marry. As authority shifts from humans to algorithms, artificial intelligence could drive billions out of the job market, creating mass unemployment. Using autonomous vehicles and precision medicine as examples, Harari vividly illustrates humanity's advantages and disadvantages in competing with machines for work. He warns that “once the unemployed truly lose economic value and can no longer make any effective contributions to societal prosperity, they will become a useless class. At that point, elite classes represented by governments may abandon investments in their healthcare and education, and they will be completely abandoned by the entire social system.”

AI and the Future of Society and Business

Every societal transformation brings both opportunities and challenges. The internet and data are reshaping our era, with the dominant forces of the world shifting from the resources and capital of the industrial age to the data and algorithms of the digital economy. Does business evolution mirror human evolution, where 99% of commercial organizations become vassals or useless? If future evolution leads to centralized business forms, the resulting monopolies based on data, technology, and business models could have far greater impact than previous monopolies divided by industry and region. Highly centralized business systems would significantly reduce the fault tolerance and error correction capacity of the entire commercial ecosystem.

Su Meng, Chairman and CEO of Percentage Group, proposed a vision of “pan-centralization” for future commerce—a multi-centered structure with dynamic equilibrium among centers. He outlined three survival principles for future business organizations, known as the “Three I’s”: Independence, Integration, and Intelligence. According to the *2017 Artificial Intelligence Industry Development Hotspot Analysis Report* jointly released by the China Artificial Intelligence Industry Innovation Alliance, the China Electronics and Information Industry Development Research Institute, and Percentage Group, 48.3% of respondents expressed concerns about the future impact of AI development.

Hong Xiaowen, Corporate Vice President of Microsoft and Chairman of Microsoft Asia-Pacific R&D Group, who has researched AI for 30 years, believes that artificial intelligence, like other tools invented by humanity, lacks creativity—its fundamental difference from humans. The future direction should be “AI + HI = SI”—the co-evolution of Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence. Hong emphasized the importance of AI transparency and democratization, ensuring that more people can benefit from technological

dividends.

Xiang Bing, Founding Dean of Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, argued that in today's globalized world, entrepreneurs in the world's second-largest economy need global vision and global responsibility. Innovators should look globally, integrating high-quality resources worldwide for their own use. Simultaneously, he stressed the importance of encouraging individual dreams, urging entrepreneurs—especially young people—to pursue ventures driven by interests, passions, responsibilities, and social problem-solving. Only then can China produce truly groundbreaking innovations.

Roundtable: Technological Evolution and Humanity's Future

In the final roundtable discussion, Yuval Harari, Su Meng, Dr. Wei Kunlin, and Yin Qi engaged in a cross-disciplinary dialogue on technological progress and humanity's future. The discussion followed a format where the moderator posed questions, each guest presented their views, and then directed their own questions to Harari. The moderator asked four guests about whether AI can defeat humans, whether AI will exacerbate class divisions, and whether they were optimistic or pessimistic about the future.

Dr. Wei Kunlin, who serves as the scientific judge on the television program *Super Brain*, has witnessed countless extreme challenges of human cognition, including remarkable pattern recognition, observational skills, super memory, and mental calculation abilities comparable to computers. In his view, every module of the human brain is being pursued by AI and may eventually be surpassed. However, he does not believe the two are necessarily incompatible. He questioned Harari's concept of the "useless class," asking "What constitutes uselessness, and what constitutes usefulness?" He also cited the example of European colonial invasions, inquiring whether the future might represent a repetition of colonial history. Regarding humanity's prospects, he suggested the outcome could be either optimistic or pessimistic, depending on individual actions.

Yin Qi, founder of Face++, believes that AI remains in a very primitive stage. Humans will prove highly adept at using new technologies to transform themselves, with human evolution proceeding alongside technological evolution. As technological evolution accelerates, human evolution will also accelerate. Rather than machines suddenly surpassing humans at a single moment, he argues that humans and machines will gradually merge—and this fusion will occur before machines could surpass humans independently. Regarding humanity's future, Yin Qi expressed an optimistic orientation.

Su Meng questioned Harari's assertion that data could become the ultimate weapon controlling human destiny, asking whether he believed certain monopolies had already emerged and whether this trend was strengthening. While acknowledging that AI development might create more intense monopolies than ever before, Su Meng expressed strong confidence in humanity's future.

Harari responded to each guest's questions, clarifying that his work does not constitute prophecy but rather explores possibilities. He noted that if certain possibilities evoke fear, much can be done to prevent them. Technology is not deterministic; its direction remains shaped by human choices.

Product Releases and Conference Experience

To conclude the conference, CITIC Publishing Group and Percentage Group unveiled a series of significant products centered on the theme of “future evolution.” CITIC Bank Credit Card Center, in partnership with CITIC Publishing Group, launched the CITIC Publishing Co-branded Credit Card (referred to as the CITIC “Idea Card”), offering rich reading benefits to elite users. Cardholders enjoy a 10% discount on all purchases at CITIC bookstores nationwide, free book borrowing at 1,500 cloud libraries, and exclusive access to one year of audio book services on the CITIC Academy APP, including Yuval Harari's exclusive free Chinese courses. This intersection of countless ideas from pioneers and explorers helps open windows to understanding the future and embarking on paths of evolution.

Liu Yijing, Vice President of Technology and Chief Architect at Percentage Group, released the company's industry-leading product series, including the Big Data Operating System BD-OS 2.0, Big Data Model Factory BD-MW, and Big Data Intelligent Applications BD-IA; the AI product series, including Intelligent Tag Factory, Intelligent Interactive Analysis Engine, and Intelligent Voice Application System; and AI scenario solutions tailored for public governance, intelligent manufacturing, media publishing, and fintech—continuously helping clients realize data value.

The XWorld conference also featured immersive experiences of today's hottest AI application scenarios, including Face++ facial recognition technology and intelligent customer service robots from Muye Robot, along with genetic testing support from the “Zhi Ji Gene” brand. These interactive segments sparked tremendous enthusiasm among attendees.

Impact and Legacy

This marked the second time CITIC Publishing Group invited Harari to China, following last year's “Great Collection” knowledge show, which attracted hundreds of thousands of participants both online and offline to read *Sapiens* together. Since its release in January, Harari's new book *Homo Deus* has sold over one million copies, drawing many readers to the conference. The event was broadcast simultaneously on more than 13 live streaming platforms, including mainstream media such as Tencent Technology, Xinhua News Agency, and NetEase, as well as popular platforms like AcFun, Panda TV, and Douyu. During Harari's speech, live viewership exceeded one million, with total live stream views reaching 2.8 million. The conference also generated widespread attention and discussion on knowledge-sharing platforms including The Paper, Jiemian,

Zhihu, Sina Weibo, and 36Kr. On the same day, CITIC Publishing Group's knowledge service platform "CITIC Academy" APP launched, with Harari as the first international master to join, offering his exclusive video course *Sapiens*.

Although the conference has concluded, discussions on human development and future evolution will continue. Riding the wave of technology, let us explore, advance, and witness together the new evolutionary path of human civilization.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.