

4. Humility

By Yuval Noah Harari

About the author

Prof. Yuval Noah Harari is a historian, philosopher, and the bestselling author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, and *Sapiens: A Graphic History*. He is a co-founder of Sapienship, a multidisciplinary organization advocating for global responsibility whose mission is to clarify the public conversation, support the quest for solutions and focus attention on the most important challenges facing the world today. He is now a lecturer in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

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Summary

The essay *Humility* is written by a renowned essayist of Jerusalem, Yuval Noah Harari. In this essay he exemplifies the virtue of humility in that he debunks humanity's illusions of superiority and mastery. He claims morality, art, spirituality and creativity are universal human abilities embedded in our DNA. In this essay, the essayist exemplifies the virtue of humility, which can be defined as "a recognition of the real limits of our techno-social knowledge and ability", in that he debunks humanity's illusions of superiority and mastery. Harari tells us that humility is a quality that most cultures lack. Most of the people tend to believe that they are the centre of the world and their culture is linchpin of human history.

Greeks believe that history began with Homer, Sophocles and Plato, and that all important ideas and inventions were born in Athens,

Sparta, Alexandria or Constantinople. There are Indians that believe that the invention of airplanes and nuclear bombs were invented by ancient sages in the Indian subcontinent long before Confucius or Plato, not to mention Einstein and the Wright brothers. The Jews believe that monotheism should be credited to them and that they are a significant group in the world - the top three religions. But there are only 15 million Jews and there is no reason to think that they should be considered more important than the Hindu religion that has far more followers.

Each group believes itself to be the center of the of the universe and the inventor of the most important philosophies and contributions. But no group is truly unique - some form of their philosophy and beliefs has existed before them. The religions that survived are those that were the most violent - they managed to convert the largest number of populations to their belief. For example, the Biblical phrase that Jews take credit for "love thy neighbour as thyself" has appeared before in China. Similarly, monotheism can be traced back to Egypt and is not originally Jewish. Monotheism has contributed to catastrophise in the world and one should not be proud for having invented it. Christianity a few centuries after its inception banned all religions except for the Jewish religion although many Jews were still persecuted, while Islam today considers all history prior to Mohammed to be irrelevant. The Chinese nationalists believe that many great ideas originated in their culture. The Jews believe that they are the chosen people, and that the gentiles are not equal to them in importance according to God. While some sages have called for religious tolerance, the prevailing trend throughout history has always been to persecute those who have different beliefs. And this is ironically the same self-centeredness that most religions have warned against.

