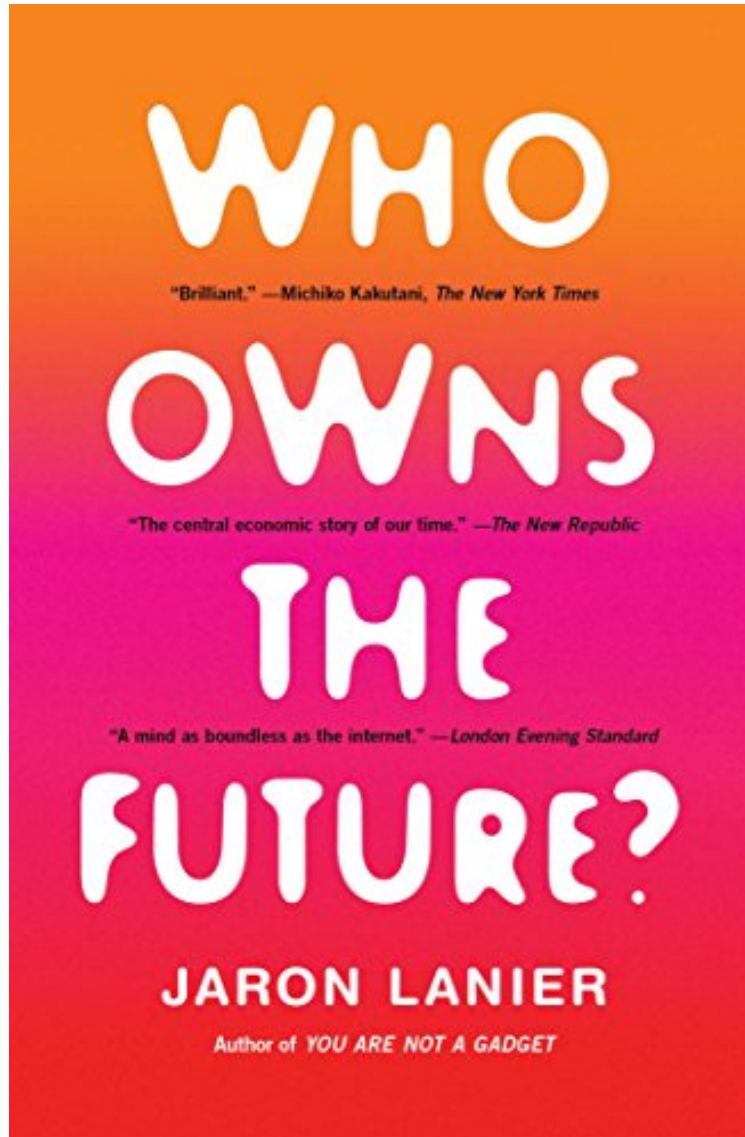


Who Owns the Future?

Jaron Lanier

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Jaron Lanier : Who Owns the Future? before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Who Owns the Future?:

159 of 172 people found the following review helpful. The internet destroys more jobs than it creates.By Orin ThomasIf you've read "Race against the machine" and "The lights in the tunnel" you'll be familiar with part of Lanier's thesis, though Lanier also goes further and ties in the demonetization of information in his predictions about the future. There are some quotable lines in the book, one of which stayed with me even though I hadn't thought of it precisely in this way - something like "the internet destroys more jobs that it creates". In a nutshell, by introducing efficiencies, by

disrupting existing markets, the internet makes things more efficient so that a greatly reduced number of people can perform the same tasks. What Lanier also highlights is that the "new jobs" that were meant to replace the ones lost to automation aren't appearing. In part because there has also been as strong push to make "information free", so jobs creating that information that "wants to be free" won't put the bread on the table. Lanier suggests that the Internet is shrinking the economy because by making information free, it's taken the value/wealth that once existed in creating that information out of the economy. That the number of jobs that the internet creates is a fraction of the number that it has automated away. Lanier proposes some solutions to this problem which would involve a seismic shift in the way that current users of the internet consider the cost of information. He suggests that the Internet could create jobs if only the creation and distribution of information could be monetized. He provides some ideas in this direction. He also makes some predictions about what happens if something doesn't change. I felt that Lanier described the problem well without going into an approach where he over did it. While I agree with the problem and think his predictions make sense, I also suspect that the people who have pushed hard to demonetizes information are about as likely to change their policies as the oil industry is in light of "peak oil". That is that the problem is understood in an academic sense, but they are still making truckloads of cash, so why change the system? At the moment the received wisdom is that the internet creates jobs and that anyone who disagrees is a luddite. I think books like Lanier's, *Race Against the Machine*, and *Lights in the Tunnel* are providing a different interpretation of the future, but one that won't be seen as prescient for a decade or so. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Concerns and Cautions/Perils and Proposals for Our Networked Information Economic Odyssey By Fred Cheyanski When I heard Jaron Lanier speak about his book, I was interested in learning more about his take our networked information economy. So it was good to finally finish the book and understand his view that, as things are currently progressing, what he terms "Siren Servers" (such as , Google, Facebook) will own the future. That is unless proposals such as his help us move to an alternative future where data ownership and costs are higher and yet there are more of us who have a piece of the action as part of a middle class that can grow and prosper. Segments that stood out or were most memorable for me included Lanier's description of Siren Server effects, his map out and summaries of nine "dismal humors" of futurism and one hopeful one (based on Ted Nelson's earlier work on "two-way links"). I also really appreciated the graph (page 209) that visually represents the hypothesis of the book that the degree of democracy/participation will rise as the cost of information increases. Of particular interest to me were his comments on how we could earn and spend as well as barriers and leadership scenarios for transitioning to more humanistic arrangements. As others have indicated, this book is dense, covers much ground, and it can be challenging for a reader to connect all the various pieces. However there are nuggets at every turn, and hanging in or returning to the text is worth it to get the insights and concerns from this tech insider. While his alternative future may not be "the one," hopefully more will heed his cautions and consider ways to promote middle class growth as the networked information economy continues to advance. Perhaps, like Odysseus, we will be able to overcome the dangerous aspects of the Sirens to further progress in the human journey. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Original and Thoughtprovoking By Jim Korein I have read and liked a number of books about accelerating technological change outstripping many of today's problems. These books, including *Abundance* (Diamandis and Kotler) and *The Infinite Resource* (Naam), make a good case for the benefits of technology, and its ability to produce value, productivity and wealth, changing the world for the better. Lanier, a computer scientist and musician, focuses on redistribution of wealth in the information age. This much is not unique; in their excellent *Race Against the Machine*, Brynjolfsson and McAfee address the decreasing need for large numbers of employees in information based industries. However, Lanier takes the argument much further. He sees freely given information increasing hoovered up by "siren servers", which use that agglomerated big data to provide great value, which can be realized through advertising, insurance, financial bets, or the creation of intelligent, knowledge-based software. As the digital economy progresses from music and books into manufacturing, healthcare and every other industry, he sees this leading to a society in which all wealth accrues to siren servers and those affiliated with them, and utter decimation of the middle class. While one might argue about the rate of change, his basic premise is compelling. But he does propose an approach to solving the problem, which is to provide people with micro-payments for information they provide. He argues that this is the fundamental currency upon which the fortunes of the siren servers is built, and the providers should be compensated according to the value of the information. This is a radical restructuring of society and value creation, but I find it much more compelling than most of the arguments I have heard about future job creation. Moreover, he makes an attempt to flesh out some aspects of how this would work. For example, Lanier proposes rectifying a tragic mistake in the design of the web, by making links two way rather than one way, thereby enabling the use of all information to be tracked from its source. In thinking through some aspects of the way this might work, Lanier reveals himself as a free-market thinker with humanistic ideals. The book is very informal and full of digressions, but most are very interesting. For example, Lanier categorizes all ways of thinking about the future into Nine Dismal Humours; this is very well done. All in all, a very original, enjoyable and provocative read.

The "brilliant" and "daringly original" (The New York Times) critique of digital networks from

the 'David Foster Wallace of tech' (London Evening Standard)—asserting that to fix our economy, we must fix our information economy. Jaron Lanier is the father of virtual reality and one of the world's most brilliant thinkers. *Who Owns the Future?* is his visionary reckoning with the most urgent economic and social trend of our age: the poisonous concentration of money and power in our digital networks. Lanier has predicted how technology will transform our humanity for decades, and his insight has never been more urgently needed. He shows how Siren Servers, which exploit big data and the free sharing of information, led our economy into recession, imperiled personal privacy, and hollowed out the middle class. The networks that define our world—including social media, financial institutions, and intelligence agencies—now threaten to destroy it. But there is an alternative. In this provocative, poetic, and deeply humane book, Lanier charts a path toward a brighter future: an information economy that rewards ordinary people for what they do and share on the web.

.com An Best Book of the Month, May 2013: Jaron Lanier's last book, *You Are Not a Gadget*, was an influential criticism of Web 2.0's crowd-sourced backbone. In *Who Owns the Future?*, Lanier is interested in how network technologies affect our culture, economy, and collective soul. Lanier is talking about pretty heady stuff—the monopolistic power of big tech companies (dubbed "Siren Servers"), the flattening of the middle class, the obscuring of humanity—but he has a gift for explaining sophisticated concepts with clarity. In fact, what separates Lanier from a lot of techno-futurists is his emphasis on the maintaining humanism and accessibility in technology. In the most ambitious part of the book, Lanier expresses what he believes to be the ideal version of the networked future—one that is built on two-way connections instead of one-way relationships, allowing content, media, and other innovations to be more easily attributed (including a system of micro-payments that lead back to its creator). Is the two-way networked vision of the internet proposed in *Who Owns the Future* quixotic? Even Lanier seems unsure, but his goal here is to establish a foundation for which we should strive. At one point, Lanier jokingly asks sci-fi author William Gibson to write something that doesn't depict technology as so menacing. Gibson replies, "Jaron, I tried. But it's coming out dark." Lanier is able to conjure a future that's much brighter, and hopefully in his imagination, we are moving closer to that. --Kevin Nguyen QA with Jaron Lanier