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Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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Book recommendations from Balaji Srinivasan, Martin Casado and Amjad Masad, a public back-and-forth over Richard Sutton's "brute force is not enough" post, and shorter endorsements.

Balaji: *Albion's Seed*

In a talk titled "The Open Source Network State," **Balaji Srinivasan** called *Albion's Seed* a "great book." For anyone without time for the whole thing, he suggested Scott Alexander's review instead. His reasoning: builders learned monetary history to build currencies in Ethereum, and they need political history in the same way to build communities. He says the book shows "how new communities were formed in the past, and their variations, and which one succeeded and which didn't" [1]. In his framing, America began as a "collective exit" from the English Civil War, made up of groups that "didn't want to fight, but wanted to go and build" [1]. Video

Casado: Sutherland's *Wheels of Incarnation*

Martin Casado wrote: "I really encourage those who haven't read Sutherland's Wheels of Incarnation to do so" [2]. What he takes from it is that the industry's history isn't just general approaches swallowing specialized ones. It is "as much specialized approaches growing towards generality." Because "there is a cost to generality," the frontier will always have areas that need specialized

solutions. He expects frontier models to absorb some specialization while new model modalities grow more general and more powerful [2]. Post

Amjad Masad: Paul Graham's "Keep Your Identity Small"

On YC's *How To Build The Future* with Paul Graham, **Amjad Masad** said people who are rigid about "this is my identity. This is what I do" should read Graham's essay "Keep Your Identity Small." He tied it to AI: "this moment requires a ton of adaptability," and the main thing to teach children is "flexibility and adaptability and like being a lifelong learner" [3]. Video

Sutton's post: Masad and Srinivas disagree

Richard Sutton posted: "Brute force computation is not enough for intelligence. Clever new methods are needed. The science of AI is far from finished" [4]. Masad shared it with the label "The Better Lesson," a play on Sutton's own "bitter lesson" [5]. **Aravind Srinivas** pushed back on the same post: "The bitter lesson works. It's bitter for everyone. Including the one who came up with it" [6]. Post

Shorter picks

- **Martin Casado** on Karina Nguyen's post: "Great. More of this line of inquiry please" [7]. After a year of deploying AI, Nguyen argues that the tasks it does best per unit of energy aren't always the most economically valuable. Since the same compute can be worth more in one business than another, "choosing where to deploy AI matters as much as how good you make it" [8]. Post
- **Reed Hastings** called Michael Kratsios's announcement of the National Policy for Nucleic Acid Synthesis Screening "Important progress" [9]. The policy sets government-wide screening requirements for synthetic DNA and synthesis equipment and replaces "self-attestation" with independent verification. NIST will issue the standards, and HHS and USDA will certify providers [10]. Post
- **Patrick O'Shaughnessy** called two resources "Good ones" without giving a reason: a YouTube video and a Stanford GSB-hosted PDF whose filename points to John Gardner's "Road to Self-Renewal" [11]. Video · PDF
- On the All-In episode about the midterms, a co-host told listeners to check out Chamath's appearance on Rick Rubin's podcast, saying "it was awesome" [12]. Chamath said Rubin's studio "puts you in a totally centered state of mind" [12].
- **Ryan Hoover** shared a Substack post, describing it as "The thing nearly *every* founder wrestles with." He didn't name its author or topic [13]. Post

- **Garry Tan** shared a "Works in Progress, on Neocameralism" excerpt with the line "Man don't show this essay to the NIMBYs" [14, 15]. Post

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Sources

1. The Open Source Network State
2. X post by @martin_casado
3. How To Build The Future: Paul Graham & Amjad Masad
4. X post by @RichardSSutton
5. X post by @amasad
6. X post by @AravSrinivas
7. X post by @martin_casado
8. X post by @karinanguyen
9. X post by @reedhastings
10. X post by @mkratsios47
11. X post by @patrick_oshag
12. Midterm Blood Bath, $4T AI Sell Off, Data Center Freeze, What's Next for Trump
13. X post by @rrhoover
14. X post by @garrytan
15. X post by @zagrebbi