1. According to Iversen and Soskice, how does the rise of a knowledge-centered new middle class create a populist backlash? Why doesn’t the old middle class form redistributive alliances with the poor or new middle class? Why is immigration the key issue for populists, rather than the knowledge economy itself?

2. Do you agree with Iversen and Soskice that populism requires a basis in material economic outcomes? What are the necessary conditions for populism?

3. What economic and political variables explain national variation in populist political success? Are some democracies especially vulnerable to populism?

4. Lipset and Rokkan famously argued political party systems and political conflict were primarily explained by major cleavages in the population, with new party systems emerging alongside new cleavages. If populism represents one half of a new cleavage, what kind of opposition do you expect to crystallize against it?

5. What are Frase’s “four futures,” and what conditions might lead to each? On what dimensions do these futures vary? Pay close attention to Frase’s 2 × 2 table. Do you have any questions or critiques about the variables or types in the table?

6. Are Frase’s futures too fanciful? Can we learn from Frase’s futures even if they are “ideal types” and not literal states of the world?

7. How does Piketty’s theory fit into Frase’s Four Futures? Can you link g and s to Frase’s two dimensions of scarcity—abundance and equality—hierarchy? What insights can you draw from each author with respect to the other?

8. Frase writes from a certain point of view (the socialist left) and with certain technological assumptions about the future (a maximalist version of technological possibility involving labor-free production of all goods). Does he have anything to offer readers who disagree with his political values or technological assumptions? What would a liberal or conservative version of Frase’s book look like – and what do “liberalism” or “conservativism” mean in a future with labor-free production? Could you sketch a techno-skeptical version?

9. Frase says he seeks to re-insert politics into debates about technological utopia (or dystopia). Does he succeed? What political forces or individual motivations does he neglect? How would correcting these omissions change the implications of the work? How would Iversen and Soskice respond to Frase?
10. What role do political institutions play in Frase’s futures, and what is he missing? For example, what might central banks do in these scenarios?

11. Does Frase overlook or understate the international dimension in his work? What if the costs of various transitions – to automation and/or global climate change – are concentrated in the developing world? Where are the refugee crises – and their political ramifications – in Frase’s *Four Futures*?

12. Can all of Frase’s futures be reached “in one country” or do some of them require international cooperation? Can some combinations of futures coexist?

13. Frase says social esteem may replace money in one possible future. Instead of competing for cash, people might compete for respect, fame, or social sanction for their identity or values. Can scarcity in such “markets” ever be eliminated? If not, would material abundance really end political conflict?

14. Taking in both Frase and Iversen and Soskice, to what extent does the path to the future depend on the political alignment of the working class? Can an increasingly diverse working class fractured by race, nationality, and nostalgia for a middle-class past unite around a utopian plan for broad redistribution? Can parties incorporate people who define themselves by work into an economy that might not need many workers? Can technology produce utopia without broad-based political support?

15. Populism has riven asunder party systems across much of the democratic world – a short list includes the US, the UK, France, Italy, and Hungary. Pairing Iversen and Soskice’s analysis with Frase’s economic speculation, what sort of party cleavages are likely to emerge to debate the future of the economy?

16. Which of Frase’s future(s) seems most likely to you? Least likely? Who or what decides? How stable would these futures be?

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