

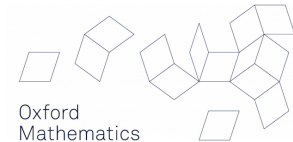
AI's Future Doesn't Have To Be Dystopian (Boston Review Essay, May 2021)

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Outline

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Intro
- 3 Historical Perspectives

Main Argument

The overarching argument is focussed on two main points

"If AI technology continues to develop along its current path, it is likely to create social upheaval for at least two reasons. For one, AI will affect the future of jobs. Our current trajectory automates work to an excessive degree while refusing to invest in human productivity; further advances will displace workers and fail to create new opportunities (and, in the process, miss out on AI's full potential to enhance productivity). For another, AI may undermine democracy and individual freedoms."

- future of work
- democracy and political stability

Future of Work - Main Point

The current development of AI crowds out workers in contrast to AI functioning as labour augmenting technology.

Policy Relevance for **AI regulation** and **AI research ethics**

- redirection of AI research through
- AI regulation
- norms and priorities for AI research
- AI research oversight

Automation across the 20th century

Technology and labour market institutions were mutually self-reinforcing so that technology aided real wage growth

"It makes sense to build long-term relationships with workers and pay them high wages when they are rapidly becoming more productive. It also makes sense to create good jobs and invest in worker productivity when labor market institutions rule out the low-wage path. Hence, technologies boosting human productivity and labor market institutions protecting workers were mutually self-reinforcing."

Automation across the 20th century

Crucial policy environment:

- labour market institutions
 - minimum wage regulations
 - collective bargaining power of workers
 - government regulation for worker protection
- market environment
 - competitive markets with technological advances as competitive advantages
 - reduction of power of large corporations (through the Progressive and New Deals)
- political environment
 - government as major funding body for technology
 - era of pluralistic power
 - investment in higher education
 - civil right movements

Current debates

Current metrics

- slow real wage growth
- very unequal wage gains
- erosion of real value of minimum wage
- increased global trade resulted in job losses in low-tech manufacturing in developed countries
- weak labour market institutions
- (technological) markets are mostly along oligopolistic competition
- government taxation in favour capital and automation tasks
- government funding motivates technology development to automate current tasks (rather than creating new tasks)

Current debates

AI and technology as reinforcements of inequality

"Automation acted as the handmaiden of inequality. New technologies primarily automated the more routine tasks in clerical occupations and on factory floors. This meant the demand and wages of workers specializing in blue-collar jobs and some clerical functions declined. Meanwhile professionals in managerial, engineering, finance, consulting, and design occupations flourished—both because they were essential to the success of new technologies and because they benefited from the automation of tasks that complemented their own work. As automation gathered pace, wage gaps between the top and the bottom of the income distribution magnified."