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Technological Unemployment

Technology has a significant impact on the workforce. Technological unemployment is one of the primary causes of job displacement. Technological unemployment is a condition in technological development that reduces the need for human labor, resulting in job losses. While technological advancements have resulted in numerous benefits, such as higher productivity and improved quality of life, they have also caused concerns about the negative impact on the workforce. The fear is that as machines become more capable of performing tasks traditionally performed by humans, a significant portion of the labor force may find themselves unemployed or facing significant shifts in the nature of their work. Many philosophers have argued about technological unemployment. John Danaher is one of the philosophers who argued about technological unemployment, and in his argument, John Danaher argues about three main claims, which are longevity dividend, flourishing and well-being in a post-work age, and the post-work utopia as a world of games.

In John Danaher's first claim, he first discusses lifespan extension and the super-aging society problem (SAS). He first began discussing the challenges that the aging population poses in developing societies with low fertility rates, increasing life expectancy, leading to a social crisis. In John Danaher's article, he mentioned this example about an old woman named Susannah Mushatt Jones who passed away, holding the title of the world's oldest person at the age of 116. Her life spanned three centuries, witnessing significant social, economic, and legal

transformations (Danaher 1). He also states that if this medical and demographic situation continues, countries around the world could face significant social and economic problems because of the super-aging populations. The SAS problem is problematic on its own, but its severity increases when we take into account the potential for widespread technological unemployment. Moreover, Danaher discussed that the value of life extension is one of the most important assumptions in his claim. Danaher described the value of life extension as if all else is equal, it is better to live a longer life, and we should try to extend people's lifespans. He also discussed an objection to this assumption. According to Danaher, "A person could be living in interminable pain (mental or physical) that makes continued life unbearable. For this person, simply extending their lifespan might not make things better" (2). Furthermore, Danaher explained life extension in two ways: lifespan extension 1 (LE1) and lifespan extension 2 (LE2). (LE1) is when you extend human life with high costs, poor health, and aging, and (LE2) is when you extend human life that is less costly, marked by good health, and associated with youthfulness. He also described other terms like Technological unemployment (TU), Polarization effect (PE), and Basic income guarantee (BIG) to explore how advancements in extending the human lifespan intersect with the changing dynamics of employment and the rise of automation. The critique against TU is rooted in the "lump of labor" fallacy, which assumes a fixed amount of work, contending that technology doesn't lead to widespread unemployment but rather alters the available job opportunities. Danaher's PE acknowledges this critique, emphasizing that technology's current discernible impact on employment is polarization. Advances in IT result in few highly paid, highly educated "abstract" jobs, the destruction of middle-income, middle-skill jobs, and the creation of many low-paid, poorly educated, and precarious "manual" jobs. Thus, the argument suggests that even without reaching widespread technological unemployment, we

are entering a phase of increased labor force stratification. To address the SAS problem, increasing fertility is suggested as a possible solution, but policymakers are wary of its potential impact on living standards and the strain on global resources. Proponents of LE2 argue that policymakers have focused too much on LE1, emphasizing the need to prioritize investments in LE2 over LE1. The idea is that by extending healthy and economically productive years of life (LE2), the SAS problem could be mitigated without resorting to increasing fertility rates. However, in a world dominated by TU, the LD argument may not effectively address the SAS problem. Instead, it could lead to more people living longer and healthier lives but being economically dependent on the state or charities. This challenges the assumption that LE2 alone can solve the societal issues associated with an aging population.

In Danaher's second claim, he addresses objections to the pursuit of longevity extension in a post-work age, despite acknowledging strong independent reasons for such investment (such as the badness of death and the goodness of a healthy life). The first objection revolves around the (SAS) problem. Policymakers may concede the independent grounds for LE2 but argue that it poses an economic challenge, resulting in more people being dependent on others for their well-being. Danaher points out that technological changes could disrupt the assumption that there will be an excessive cost for supporting dependent populations. The future, as described by Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), may involve increasing abundance, and spread, resulting in greater income and wealth inequality. However, the poorer populations might still benefit from machine-assisted abundance, including care and assistance for the elderly or ill. Danaher identifies (BIG) as a suitable solution to address the economic challenges associated with increasing spread. He also suggested that combining Technological Unemployment (TU) with lifespan extension (LE1 or LE2) could be advantageous for BIG proponents.

The second objection challenges the idea that living longer lives in states of flourishing and well-being is inherently good. The objection arises in a world of technological unemployment (TU) or post-employment (PE), where paid employment is viewed as a privileged context for achieving goods that contribute to flourishing and well-being. Ghaeus and Herzog (2016) identify four non-monetary goods associated with work: mastery/excellence, community, social contribution, and status. The objection suggests that (BIG) may not adequately compensate for the loss of these non-monetary goods linked to work. Therefore, the objection contends that people living longer and healthier lives in a world without work may not necessarily foster flourishing and well-being.

In Danaher's third claim, he discussed the concerns about flourishing in a post-work future revolving around a potential "meaning deficit." According to Thaddeus Metz's theory, life gains meaning when individuals contribute to the good, the true, and the beautiful. The challenge lies in automated technologies disrupting the crucial link between personal actions and their impact on the world, as these technologies eliminate the need for human involvement in certain pursuits. Danaher believes that "… paid work is often boring and degrading, and that we would be better off without it, is that we tend to assume that if we can achieve TU and BIG, then the automating technologies that make this possible will simply free us up to pursue things that provide opportunities for genuine meaning and flourishing" (9). Danaher then proposes a radical shift in thinking about a flourishing life in a post-work future, suggesting that game-playing could become a source of meaning and a basis for a utopian form of flourishing. Games, as defined by Bernard Suits, have prelusory goals, constitutive rules, and a lusory attitude. The conceptual analysis of games is further elaborated by Thomas Hurka, who argues that games provide a platform for achieving two important kinds of value: a sense of achievement through

means-end reasoning and an Aristotelian distinction between process-oriented and goal-oriented activities. The claim stated that a world consisting of elaborate games, where the goals are essentially inconsequential, and the focus is on the internal process could provide a form of flourishing. Danaher challenges the notion that a world devoid of concerns about the good and the truth is inferior, suggesting that in a utopian world where suffering and limitations are overcome, the value derived from purely procedural goods in game-playing may be the only relevant source of meaning. The combination of a post-work utopia and advanced automated technologies is seen as a potential catalyst for realizing this vision of a utopian world centered around game-playing.

John Danaher's proposal of a basic income guarantee to address technological unemployment is a potential solution to economic and societal challenges. However, it is important to consider several concerns. Some argue that work provides not only income but also a sense of purpose and accomplishment for many individuals. Even with a basic income guarantee, the absence of traditional employment may lead to a lack of fulfillment for those who find intrinsic satisfaction in their work and the sense of contributing to society. Additionally, a society with a large portion of the population not actively engaged in traditional work may experience a decline in innovation. The competitive drive and problem-solving skills cultivated through employment are essential drivers of progress, and a significant reduction in the workforce could impede advancements in science, technology, and other fields. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancement may cause certain skills to become obsolete quickly. Without the necessity for continuous skill development through employment, individuals might lose the incentive to acquire new knowledge and expertise. This could lead to a population with inactive skill sets, potentially hindering overall societal progress. Moreover, shifting from a

work-centric culture to one emphasizing leisure and non-productive activities may result in unforeseen cultural and psychological consequences. Some might suggest that a society where a significant portion of the population is not engaged in productive work may face challenges related to identity, motivation, and overall societal cohesion.

Danaher may suggest that my response is not for people who do not like to work. Also, he might propose that it is important to recognize the diversity of people's preferences when it comes to work. He argues that technological unemployment with a basic income guarantee is not intended for those who inherently enjoy traditional work structures. His perspective is particularly beneficial for individuals who find conventional employment boring or degrading. According to Danaher, “The problem then with those, like me, who insist that paid work is often boring and degrading and that we would be better off without it, is that we tend to assume that if we can achieve TU and BIG, then the automating technologies that make this possible will simply free us up to pursue things that provide opportunities for genuine meaning and flourishing” (9). However, he might also acknowledge that people have diverse preferences, and while some may thrive in the proposed model of technological unemployment, others may still find fulfillment in traditional work structures. His view lies in providing individuals with the freedom to choose and pursue activities that align with their sense of meaning and flourishing, whether it be through conventional work or alternative pursuits such as creative endeavors, personal development, and community engagement.

Works Cited

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