Supporting Responsible AI Submission

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The advent of AI tools such as ChatGPT will be the start of a technology driven productivity increase of a degree we have not seen from IT before. The tools will affect every aspect of the economy the way that steam power affected every aspect of life during the industrial revolution. However, unlike the industrial revolution, the effects good and bad, will not take decades. These tools are currently being introduced at a rapid pace in business, and have already been used by many, if not most, students in high schools and universities in this country just a few months after ChatGPT went public.

Unlike other IT, these tools do not require any training or skill to use. Business will not need to hire people with specialist training. The tools allow people to more rapidly complete the work they already do, and take on tasks beyond their current level of expertise. This will necessarily lead to redundancies and reduced employment opportunities. It is not clear that new forms of work will become available to replace jobs that are lost at a similar income level.

There are clear risks in terms of data security, privacy and in the potential for deceptive and misleading applications. However, in my opinion, the bigger risk is that the benefits of AI will not flow to all even when these problems are dealt with.

The role of government should be to ensure that the hardship and loss of living standards that ordinary people endured during the first decades of the industrial revolution, where life expectancy fell to its lowest since the 14th century when the plague swept across Europe, is not repeated, albeit from the vastly higher point we are at today. To do this it will be necessary to ensure that people have a much stronger social security safety net, and that the companies and individuals profiting directly and indirectly from AI are taxed in such a way that the money does not all flow offshore, or to a small cohort of the wealthiest.

It will be necessary for leaders to truly lead and change the culture we have where people who are out of work are treated as second class citizens, and where harassment of the unemployed by the use of harsh regulation (such as RoboDebt) is deemed an acceptable way to give people an incentive to find work that is not available. We will have to stop making a fetish out of work and accept that it will not be necessary or desirable for everyone to have a job all the time.

It is not hard to imagine truly fantastic outcomes if AI is managed well. We could raise living standards, improve health, education and leisure, and do so without needing to spend as much time as we currently do at work. Lets make sure we aim for that, instead of allowing AI to become merely another tool for the super rich to extract even more wealth and power from the rest of the population.