



# Embracing liberatory alienation: AI will end us, but not in the way you may think

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## Abstract

This paper introduces the concept of "liberatory alienation" to explore the complex relationship between technological advancement, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), and human essence. Building upon and critiquing Marx's theory of alienation, we argue that the externalization of human abilities through technology, while potentially disorienting, can ultimately lead to societal liberation and a redefined conception of humanity. The paper examines how AI and automation are reshaping our understanding of labor, skills, and human nature, challenging traditional notions of what it means to be human.

We propose that as AI increasingly takes over both manual and routine cognitive tasks, humans are liberated to focus on uniquely human qualities such as creativity, agency, and the capacity for joy. This transformation is likened to an evolutionary process, where humans shed layers of false humanity tied to productive labor, revealing a more authentic core. The implications of this shift for education are discussed, advocating for a fundamental reassessment of educational priorities to cultivate these essential human qualities.

The paper also addresses potential challenges, including the environmental impact of AI development and the need for human control over AI systems. By reframing alienation as a potentially liberating force, this work contributes to ongoing debates about the future of work, human identity, and the role of technology in society, offering a nuanced perspective on how we might navigate the profound changes brought about by AI and automation.

**Keywords** Liberatory alienation · AI education · Human essence · Skill obsolescence · Educational priorities · Cognitive labor · Post-scarcity learning

Upon first interacting with ChatGPT, a well-educated person may experience a complex emotional trajectory. Initial curiosity and fascination with the machine's capabilities soon give way. They are replaced by a sense of disquiet. This unease stems from two primary realizations. First, there is a machine's potential to render years of learning to write worthless. It also threatens to disrupt traditional markers of social status. These include the distinction between the educated and the uneducated. Second, there is imperative to revamp existing pedagogical frameworks. Students will inevitably employ such bots to generate acceptable assignments.

The AI technologies envisioned to bring about this transformation include not only narrow AI systems like ChatGPT

but also the potential development of artificial general intelligence (AGI). AGI, a hypothetical machine capable of performing any intellectual task that a human can, could automate a significant portion of both manual and cognitive labor across various fields and domains. The impact of such systems would extend far beyond the realm of language and writing, potentially reshaping industries, economies, and societies as a whole.

This paper posits that the mass introduction of AI exemplifies a larger trend termed "liberatory alienation". In this phenomenon, abilities once deemed uniquely human are externalized, becoming tools that reshape our understanding of human essence. While this externalization can induce individual alienation, it simultaneously offers societal liberation. The process can be interpreted as the divestment of mechanistic aspects of human life, paving the way for a redefined conception of what it means to be human. The shift will have profound implications for education.

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