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Multigenre Persuasive Campaign

[Tweet](https://twitter.com/OwenCompher/status/1600539055812268033): “If robots and AI ever get to the point where they can out-compete us for almost any job, how can we guarantee that society sees the benefits from the increased productivity? I feel like capital income tax and UBI will eventually be necessary for a non-dystopian society”

The genre for Tweets can sometimes be hard to define, especially because ‘a Tweet’ could be considered its own genre. I think this artifact fits in the genre of ‘Tweet’, in that it is a kind of status message that doesn’t have a specific intended audience other than my followers (which I don’t control) or anyone else who happens to see (which I also don’t control). The purpose of the Tweet is to get people to think about the issue, and to prompt discussion about this. I achieve this by asking a question, which is partially rhetorical, because I also include my own take on the issue. This reflects my secondary, underlying purpose, which is to make the claim that UBI is the solution to economic problems related to automation, robots, and AI.

Podcast Transcript:

Hey guys, welcome to this week’s episode of Social Problems.

Today we are talking about robots, AI, automation, and income inequality. First off, lets define exactly what we are talking about.

Robots are machines that can be programmed to do specific tasks – so anything from a vending machine to a self-driving car would be considered a robot. A.I, on the other hand, is anything, other than humans, that has intelligence. This is usually software that is designed to make decisions or some other output. So our self-driving car would have an artificial intelligence that tells it where to go and how to stay in its lane – also think about chatbots or these A.I. art generators that have been controversial lately.

Now, the way they are relevant to todays topic is how they are used for automation. Ever since robots first became a thing, there has always been controversy about them taking our jobs, and yeah, that’s what they are designed to do. But robots have always been pretty dumb; they could only do simple, repetitive tasks. And that automation comes from innovation that creates new jobs, so we’ve never seen more than temporary or negligible unemployment.

Where this changes is when we introduce artificial intelligence. Smarter robots move closer and closer to being interchangeable with human laborers. This isn’t just for low skilled workers; many A.I. experts think they will soon be able to use machine learning to exponentially increase the amount and complexity of tasks they can complete. Pretty soon, creative and managerial roles could also be filled by robots.

Eventually, robots will be nearly perfect substitutes for human labor, which could have a profound effect on our economies, and by extension societies and standard of living. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing; I mean, we’ll be able to produce way more without nearly as many hours of labor. The question to ask is: who sees the benefits of this increased productivity?

When people can be replaced by robots that don’t need to be paid, wages will begin to fall. that’s just supply and demand. Even as prices fall to reflect cheaper production costs, the profits will go to fewer and fewer people. Whoever owns the robots will be able to make a lot of money off that free labor. There is a risk that the richest people will be able to use productivity increases to control a majority of the worlds wealth. Basically, increased productivity due to cheap robot labor could result in huge wealth inequality.

How could we solve this problem? Now, I’m not a socialist, but it seems to me like the simplest solution would be a universal basic income. If we ever want a future where anyone can live comfortably without needing to work, that is the way to do it. Obviously we would need to increase taxes to afford this, especially when most people won’t have jobs to pay income taxes on. I think eventually we should implement a kind of capital value tax, or even a limit on the amount of income a single person or corporation can keep simply from owning productive capital.

Regardless of your political views on such things, it should be obvious that there is the potential for a dystopian future that needs to be addressed.

But that will be it for today, thanks for listening. Don’t forget to tune in next week, when I will discuss they how the concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity are evolving in our society.

This podcast concept, *Social Problems*, is borrowed from the podcast episode my roommate and I made for his Multi-genre Campaign. It is directed at young adults, to inform them about the issues they might face in the near future (his podcast episode was about the worldwide water crisis). It uses academic language and references expert opinion and research, but is presented with a more conversational syntax that would be easier to listen to and comprehend. The idea is to make the discourse more accessible without ‘dumbing down’ the core concepts.