

Humans are taking on a new role

As artificial intelligence takes over more and more tasks, this is no longer just about our jobs. It is about how we see ourselves as human beings.



This morning, I'm sitting on the terrace with a cup of coffee, watching my two dogs, Rocko and Donnie. They're still dozing sleepily in the sun, sniffing around in the grass and blinking dreamily into the sunlight. Neither of them knows what day of the week it is. Neither of them worries about whether they are doing enough, earning enough money or being successful enough. They simply exist. And somehow, that seems to be perfectly enough for them.

Of course, I know that we humans are not dogs. We have responsibilities, bills to pay and lives to organise. Still, I sometimes wonder when we started believing that our worth – and the main purpose of our lives – depends on how busy we are.

This question is taking on a whole new meaning right now, because AI is increasingly taking this kind of work away from us.

Our Work Was Our Identity

For generations, work was far more than simply a way to earn a living. It gave our lives structure, recognition and a sense of belonging. Work gave us an income, security, social recognition and often the feeling of being needed.

When asked, "Who are you?", many people would naturally answer with their profession. "I'm a carpenter." "I'm a teacher." "I work for the postal service." Our profession was not just what we did. It

was part of who we were. This model has shaped our society – and the way we see ourselves.

What Happens When Our Job Identity Disappears?

Today, artificial intelligence is transforming the world of work at breathtaking speed. Software writes texts, analyses data and develops software. Robots take over physical tasks. Some professions are changing fundamentally, while new ones are emerging. But I believe we are often discussing the wrong question.

It is not only about which jobs will disappear or which new ones will emerge. It is about what we will base our sense of worth on in the future. If achievement has been our most important measure of value for decades, it is perfectly understandable that many people feel deeply unsettled. Not only because they are afraid of losing their jobs, but because another question suddenly arises: **What will I be needed for in the future?**

We Need a New Definition of Identity

And yet, this could also be where a great opportunity lies. Perhaps AI is not just a technological revolution. Perhaps it is inviting us to rethink what it means to be human. Because the more routine tasks machines take over, the more important the abilities become that no machine can replace: compassion. Trust. Creativity. Humour. Responsibility. The ability to build relationships, encourage others and create a sense of community.

Perhaps in the future, human beings will be defined less by their productivity and more by the

contribution they make to the lives of others. That would not be a defeat. **It would be a new kind of freedom.**

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When I watch Rocko and Donnie, I realise how naturally they live in the present moment. They do not have to prove to anyone that they are valuable. Well, at least until treats are involved – then they make their importance pretty clear.

Of course, we cannot compare our lives to those of dogs. But perhaps the way they experience the world reminds us of something we have forgotten along the way: that life is about more than simply functioning. That work matters, but it does not determine our entire worth. And that right now, we have an opportunity as a society to ask ourselves again what it really means to be human.

Perhaps the historic switch of our time is therefore not simply that machines are becoming increasingly intelligent. Perhaps it is that, alongside artificial intelligence, we are rediscovering what **human intelligence** really means.

The historic switch has already begun. Let's use it not only to rethink the way we work, but also to rethink what it means to be human.

The Switch Column by Monica Deters

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