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Are we ready for AI? (prepared with Microsoft Copilot and Google NotebookLM)

We are in the midst of ongoing technological and societal transition driven by the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), possibly leading to a fundamental change in the economy and society. The shift poses urgent and important questions regarding the nature of the economy, governance, and human purpose.

I. Economic Transformation and Societal Disruption

The predicted changes caused by AI are sweeping, affecting nearly every sector of the economy.

Job Market and Productivity: AI is gradually replacing both white-collar and blue-collar jobs.

Many white-collar positions—including information services, booking, research, and medicine—will be taken over by AI, while blue-collar tasks will be handled by robots augmented with AI. The IMF warns that AI could affect almost **40% of jobs worldwide**.

Despite the displacement, AI is expected to generate massive economic benefits:

- **Productivity Gains:** AI can automate routine tasks, optimize logistics, and improve decision-making, leading to significant increases in productivity and long-term growth, as noted by the OECD.
- **Economic Growth:** Goldman Sachs estimates AI could add **\$7 trillion (7%) to global GDP** over a decade. McKinsey projects even higher figures.
- **Resilience:** In aging societies, such as Germany, AI is expected to offset shrinking populations by driving GDP growth, estimated at about 0.8 percentage points annually over 15 years.
- **Innovation:** AI enables entirely new markets through new products and services, ranging from personalized medicine to advanced manufacturing.

Inequality and Wealth Concentration: A major risk is the deepening of economic inequality. High-skilled workers and capital owners are likely to benefit the most. This acceleration risks deepening the “**productivity-pay gap**,” where wages do not keep pace with output, potentially widening the gap between the very rich and the poor. AI may also concentrate economic power in fewer hands by reinforcing the dominance of large technology firms.

II. The Primacy of Values and Governance

The core insight is that the **economy is not a machine separate from society; it is a social institution** shaped by values, priorities, and governance. The way an economy is regulated reflects collective priorities such as growth, equity, and sustainability.

Governance and Policy Needs: Policy systems mediate between competing societal values—such as growth, equality, sustainability, and freedom—and translate them into economic rules. If society values inclusivity and sustainability, AI can help achieve these goals; conversely, if these values are neglected, AI risks exacerbating existing divides.

To mitigate risks and harness the benefits, policymakers must focus on:

- **Balanced Regulation:** Policymakers must ensure that AI adoption benefits society broadly, not

just elites. The IMF stresses the need for policies to prevent worsening inequality.

- **Education and Reskilling:** Investment in lifelong learning and digital literacy is critical for preparing workers for AI-driven changes.
- **Ethical Frameworks:** Governance must align AI deployment with core societal values, including **fairness, transparency, and sustainability**, to prevent economic gains from coming at the cost of social cohesion.

III. Urgent Risks and the Future of Human Purpose

The transition to an AI-integrated society presents significant high-risk concerns and challenges spanning social order, security, and human existence.

High-Risk and Security Concerns: Urgent, near future threats include:

- The deployment of **autonomous weapons**.
- The misuse of AI for **misinformation spreading, gaining political or other control, and cyber-attacks**.
- The impact of job losses on **social order, social values, and governance**. The creation of a new, large, and politically influential class of “laid off workers” is predicted.

Long-Term Existential Questions: Beyond immediate security threats, there are long-term challenges concerning the nature of AI itself and its effect on humanity. These include the risk of **AI becoming autonomous and not acting according to human interests**, and its potential long-term effect on human civilization, technological progress, and even human evolution (e.g., the potential for humans to become hybrids).

In a world where companies and enterprises that create goods and services might be managed or even run by AI—potentially replacing even top decision-makers—the place of humanity becomes uncertain. The central existential questions relate to human purpose: Will humans retire? Will they retain a **sense of purpose**? What kind of society will result, and how will essential social interactions, such as socializing, dating, and forming friendships and partnerships, function? Ultimately, AI’s economic impact is best understood as magnifying society’s existing priorities, necessitating a conscious effort to align technology deployment with collective values.