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Can Robots Make Us More Human?

A guest article from [Duncan Wardle](#)

A.I. is being used across the globe to help protect our futures. Recently, Microsoft pledged \$50 million to its “A.I. for Earth” program to help figure out new solutions for climate change using A.I. technology. The inevitable mass adoption of A.I. raises a lot of questions about the purpose of humans. I believe that the next decade will see A.I. dramatically change the way humans work, but I’m also confident that there is nothing to fear. Actually, I believe it’s quite the opposite...we should be excited about the future A.I. will bring, and how it will allow us to do what we do best: be human.

The 4 Biggest Challenges Facing A.I.

The evolution of A.I. is taking place at an astonishing rate. And while this may mean that certain tasks and even entire jobs and industries will soon be replaced by robots, the human workforce is far from out of a job. In fact, humans are needed now more than ever. The core human traits of Creativity, Intuition, Curiosity and Imagination are hard for machines to replicate.

1. Creativity

Last Christmas, I purchased a shiny new bike for my nephew. The bike came in a giant cardboard box, which I neatly gift wrapped and placed under the tree. As all children do, come Christmas my nephew tore through the wrapping in seconds, ripped open the box, and took out the bike to examine it in all its glory. Yet moments later, what did he spend the rest of the day playing with? The box! Why? Because it could be anything he wanted it to be. A castle, a rocket ship, a fort, a kitchen. When was the last time you saw a box and imagined a castle? Probably around the age of 6. Because it's around this age that we enter the school system and are told for the first of many times that a box is just a box.

We were all born creative, but then we went to school and then college and got a job and most likely found ourselves being told “you're not creative” or “leave those ideas to the Creative Team”. And sure enough, over time we end up believing we're not creative. That the “creative” humans work in the “creative” departments and teams. But here's the thing, creativity is not just the ability to draw or paint or play music. It's the ability to think creatively and solve problems. A skill that – within the disruption of the next decade – will become one of the most highly sought in the world. And a skill that has been buried within all of us since childhood, just waiting to be woken up again.

2. Intuition

Have you ever caught yourself staring across the room at someone you found attractive, only to have them immediately turn around and stare back at you so quickly that you had to avert your gaze and pretend you were looking elsewhere? How did they know you were looking at them? It's the same reason you can “feel” that the car in the next lane is about to swerve in front of you even though their turn signal isn't on – Intuition. A built-in survival engine hard-wired into all of us.

Did you know that you have more than one brain? The outer brain – most recently developed through evolution – controls our logic and reason and planning skills. The types of things needed to build advanced tools like self-driving cars and A.I.. But then there is the inner “reptilian” brain. The brain that's been there since humans first arrived over 200,000 years ago. This is the brain responsible for those “gut” feelings. Your intuition. The fight or flight response. And while our new, outer brain is much more capable of making sound, responsible decisions, more often than not it's our inner reptilian brain that's driving the ship.

This inner brain behind our gut feelings is so important, that it's comprised of over 70 billion neurons. Our outer brain? A mere 16 billion neurons. While our rational outer brain allows us to synthesize all the big quantitative data in front of us to find core insights, our inner, intuitive brain allows us to take all that data, match it up with our qualitative findings, and take the leap towards action. And it's this symbiotic relationship

between our inner and outer brains that make humans uniquely capable of uncovering massive innovation... a skill that will be incredibly difficult for machines to replicate.

3. Curiosity

What is the most common question your children ask? Why? Why? and Why Again? “Why” is how we all learn. But education and corporate life teach us that there is only one right answer, so much so that we stop looking for the second answer. This eventually leads most of us to stop asking why, and to just iterate rather than innovate. Albert Einstein once said, “I am not particularly clever I am just innately curious.” Think of all the inventions that have been discovered because their inventor simply refused to take the first answer for granted, and continued to ask “Why?”

More often than not, it's the fourth or fifth “Why” that gets you to the real insight. Ask why people go to Disneyland and most will tell you they go for the rides. Dig a little deeper and eventually, you'll discover that it's not actually about the rides at all. It's about family time together, traditions, nostalgia and building memories.

4. Imagination

In addition to his insights on curiosity, Albert Einstein also saw the significance of imagination, saying: “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Time and time again, this insight has been proven. When President Kennedy said “We choose to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade” he didn't have the slightest idea as to how it would be achieved. Had he possessed a robust knowledge of space travel at the time, he might not have actually given this iconic speech, choosing instead to believe that a moon landing was impossible. But he led with his imagination, and believed that the U.S. possessed the people, resources, and willpower to achieve this audacious goal. And he was right. In fact, his declaration was so profound that it gave birth to the phrase “Moon Shot Thinking.”

While many of us may believe we aren't all that imaginative, we still catch ourselves daydreaming from time to time. We all have those incredible, lucid dreams every now and then. There is a place inside our heads where we go, beyond our conscious brand, and let our imagination runs wild. And it's in this place where our best ideas live too. We just have to find them.

We won't lose human jobs. We will simply change them. Read any article related to A.I., and you'll inevitably come across stats highlighting how many jobs are being replaced by robots. I even spoke at a recent conference where fellow speaker Nicholas Thompson, Editor in Chief of Wired, discussed how he believes that by 2030, 20% of all current occupations will be replaced by A.I. Scary stuff, right? Well, it's not as dire as you might think. While these forecasts may in fact come to fruition, it doesn't mean A.I. and humans can't be friends. In fact, we should be excited about what A.I. is going to do for our futures, and the benefits we'll

experience by learning to collaborate with Artificial Intelligence. Because when used correctly, A.I. can actually free us up to spend more of our time leveraging our four core human strengths, allowing us to do our best work, and creating new jobs in the process.

It's time to embrace a world in which we are no longer responsible for mundane tasks, and instead, delegate that labor to intelligent machines that will do the work without getting bored and distracted. All the while, freeing up our minds to be more creative and more strategic. "Forty percent of us used to know how to milk cows, but now less than 1% do. We all used to tell elevator operators which floor we wanted, and now we press buttons. Most of us now drive cars and trucks and trains, but that's on the verge of being over. A.I.s are most likely not going to kill jobs. They will handle parts of jobs, enhancing the productivity of their humans," says Matt Mason, in a recent study from Pew Research.

We are at the dawn of a decade where our core human traits will become more useful than ever before. In a world where we will be able to program robots to do almost anything for us, things like imagination and creativity will become an extraordinary advantage. The rise of robots will only make us more human. So instead of fearing A.I., how might we leverage both our uniquely human assets and the inevitable advances in technology to build a better tomorrow together? We may not have the answers yet, but with a little curiosity, creativity and innovation, I'm sure we will figure it out.

Formerly Disney's Head of Innovation and Creativity, Duncan Wardle works with brands like Coca-Cola, Ford, and Johnson & Johnson on developing a culture of creativity across everything they touch. The man who pioneered the Disney Innovation Process was the keynote presenter during mhca's Memphis Conference - Home Edition virtual event. You can watch the recording of his presentation here: <https://mhca.com/conference-presentations/2020-memphis-home-edition/2154-business-as-unusual-wardle-video>. Contact Duncan at ignite@duncanwardle.com.



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