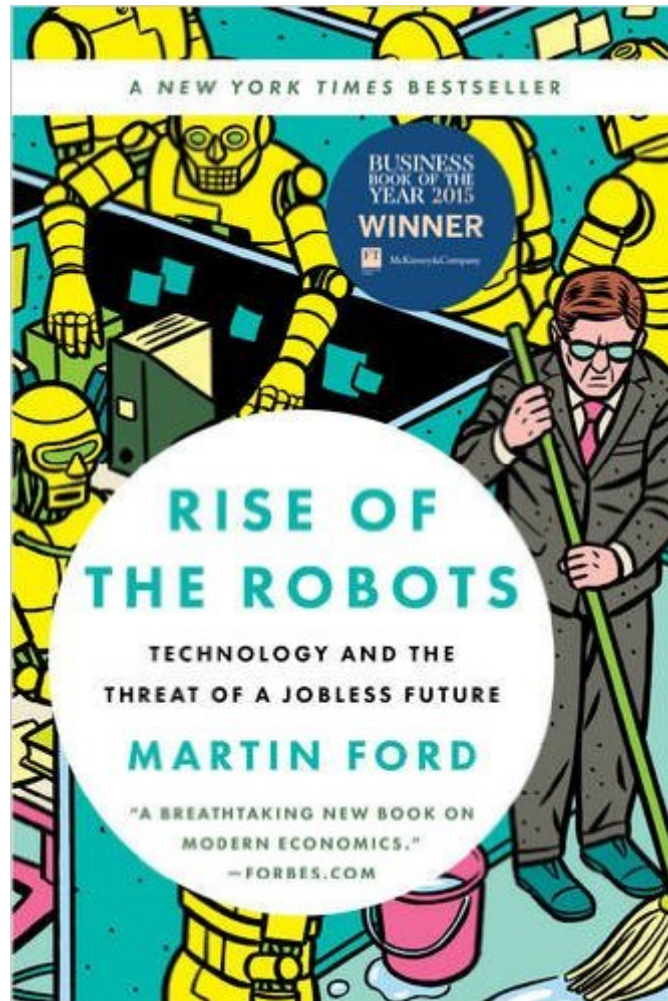


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Rise Of The Robots: Technology And The Threat Of A Jobless Future



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 FT & McKinsey Business Book of the Year Award
A New York Times Bestseller
Top Business Book of 2015 at Forbes
One of NBCNews.com 12 Notable Science and Technology Books of 2015
What are the jobs of the future? How many will there be? And who will have them? As technology continues to accelerate and machines begin taking care of themselves, fewer people will be necessary. Artificial intelligence is already well on its way to making 'good jobs' obsolete: many paralegals, journalists, office workers, and even computer programmers are poised to be replaced by robots and smart software. As progress continues, blue and white collar jobs alike will evaporate, squeezing working- and middle-class families ever further. At the same time, households are under assault from exploding costs, especially from the two major industries—education and health care—that, so far, have not been transformed by information technology. The result could well be massive unemployment and inequality as well as the implosion of the consumer economy itself. The past solutions to technological disruption, especially more training and education, aren't going to work. We must decide, now, whether the future will see broad-based prosperity or catastrophic levels of inequality and economic insecurity. *Rise of the Robots* is essential reading to understand what accelerating technology means for our economic prospects—not to mention those of our children—as well as for society as a whole.

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Customer Reviews

I have taught Artificial Intelligence (AI) for 3 decades at a major university. Until about 10 years ago, whenever someone worried about the effect of intelligent software/hardware destroying future jobs, I would always give my "buggy whip" argument, which goes like this: "When the automobile was invented it DID destroy many jobs. Makers of buggy whips and horse troughs were put out of business. But many more NEW jobs were created to replace those older jobs. Witness all the gas stations, auto mechanic shops, car factories, etc." About 8 years ago I lost faith in the buggy whip argument. I realized that, as the technology of AI advanced, a point would be reached in which intelligent software and general-purpose robots could perform all tasks (both mental and physical) that are currently achievable only by highly educated humans. Once one intelligent robot exists with a high level of general intelligence, it can be mass produced. There have been many advances in AI in recent years (in neural networks, planning and learning systems). Machine learning systems can now learn a number of complex cognitive tasks simply by observing the past performance of human experts. I have always been an admirer of the combination of modern capitalism and (relatively) free markets as the major drivers of wealth. However, modern capitalism (with its corporations, stock and dividends) is less than a few centuries old. There is no reason to believe that it must last forever. Its "reign" over older economic systems may well end abruptly in the near future.

Economists have long derided early 1800s' Luddite 'lump of labor' belief that there was only a fixed amount of work to be done, and that labor-saving devices would detract from available jobs. Historically, that has been far from the case in the U.S. - advancing technology has steadily brought more prosperity for all. Even the mechanization of American agriculture, despite eliminating millions of jobs, failed to create massive unemployment - millions more new jobs became available in manufacturing. Then came automation and sending jobs to Mexico and the Far East (outsourcing, globalization, offshoring) - those lost jobs were replaced by new service jobs, often offering better wages. Until now. America's economy is now obviously stuck in a rut, notwithstanding the almost daily reports of new technologies, green products, and purportedly beneficial free trade pacts. In fact, author Ford (and others) tells us we're now realizing this formerly symbiotic relationship between increasing productivity and rising standards of living began weakening in the 1970s. In a 1/2/2010 article, the Washington Post reported that the just completed first decade of the 21st century brought no new jobs, a first since the Great Depression. This 'lost decade' is especially astonishing when one also realizes our economy needs to create about a million jobs/year just to keep up with growth in the size of the workforce. Meanwhile, income inequality has rebounded, reaching levels not seen since 1929. Ford (mistakenly) attributes this new economy entirely to

automation, severely underestimating the impact of offshoring.

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