

Traditional Performing Arts are Robot-Proof

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One day I read an article in a newspaper. It said that in the future, more and more jobs are in danger because of the AI. In fact, according to Michael Osborne, a professor of Oxford University, robots are likely to take away human jobs in some professions, with a probability of more than 90%. Today in Japan, some robots are performing or acting on stage. Actually, Fukuoka Softbank Hawks in NPB made their cheer team by robots. In addition, to add insult to injury, Japanese traditional performing arts are suffering from a serious shortage of human resources. When AI takes over our jobs, what would those people who would lose their jobs do for a living? How are they going to survive and feed their family?

Speaking of traditional performing arts. Are you familiar with Nohgaku? When I was eight years old, I started playing Nohgaku, a traditional and creative Japanese performing art form. What is creative? I learned something from my experience. The depth of Nohgaku lies in the fact that the same act can never be performed twice. There is a reason for this. It is human imperfection. This is something that only humans have, and cannot be replicated by robots. This imperfection is what makes each and every performance of Nohgaku unique. We call it Yugen. Yugen is not only true of Nohgaku, but also of all traditional Japanese arts. This means that Nohgaku, and other traditional arts, can never be replaced by robots. This is actually, “robot-proof” jobs.

According to Osborne’s paper, in perception and manipulation tasks, robots are still incapable of matching the depth and breadth of human cognition. In creative intelligence tasks, the psychological processes inherent in human creativity are not as deep and wide as they could be, which means it is difficult for AI to identify that processes. And in social intelligence tasks, human social intelligence is important in a wide range of labor tasks like negotiation, persuasion and care. Due to the lack of engineering solutions to overcome this problem, jobs that require a high degree of creative and social intelligence tasks are not likely to be automated over the next 20 years according to the report, and those tasks are exactly what Yugen requires.

Since Nohgaku and other traditional performing arts are not likely to be replaced by AIs, I believe these traditional performing will be considered as new job options, which means they have great potential for employment. And at the same time, if these jobs are paid more attention, we can continue to pass on what has been passed down from generation to generation and help in preserving and protecting a part of our history and culture. It’s like killing two birds with one stone, right?

Certainly, we cannot deny that using AI systems has made our lives so much easier and more convenient. In fact, nowadays, AI systems are used almost everywhere: in transportations, securities and control, business processing and other manufacturing industries. I don’t think there is anything wrong with using AI as we move forward to the future, for we know that it has served us well.

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So instead of arguing whether we should continue to use AI's in the future or not, we should utilize our creativity, intelligence and improve certain skills which cannot be replicated by AI that will create new jobs as possible solutions for future employment problems. Who knows, the day may not be far off when traditional performing arts such as Nohgaku will play an active role as new desirable opportunities in the future because they are certainly "robot-proof" jobs.