



AI and the Coming Economic Reckoning

By Dr. James L. Norrie, DPM, LL.M

What if the biggest threat to our economic future isn't a trade war, new tariffs, or economic migration? What if the real future disruption is coming from something we barely understand and have scarcely begun to govern: artificial intelligence?

We are living through a profound jolt to the world economic order. Tariffs and trade disputes dominate today's headlines, but they are only surface tremors. Beneath them, a deeper force is reshaping the economic ground we stand on. AI is advancing at breakneck speed and innovation cycles that once took years now unfold in weeks, even days. Everyday brings new announcements—generative platforms, autonomous agents, robotic systems—all driven by big tech racing to own our human future. This isn't just another technological advance, but a quiet reordering of our economic and social destiny. And it raises an uncomfortable question: are we so dazzled by what AI can do that we are ignoring what it will undo?

Beneath all this glittering AI promise lies a harder truth. We are accelerating toward upheaval, and society appears dangerously unprepared. AI-driven automation threatens not just factory jobs but entire professions. From paralegals and accountants to marketers and customer service representatives, no sector will be immune. As someone who teaches law, I see it firsthand. Our world will simply need fewer lawyers. And what is true in my field will be true across the economy: each breakthrough quietly signals that human labor is being displaced by astonishing advances in machine reasoning. Understanding AI's impact is no longer optional. It is essential.

Disruption will not stop at the margins. It will ripple through the center of society, leaving millions without the jobs and incomes that defined their lives. Past industrial revolutions unfolded more slowly, giving us decades to adjust. But AI will compress that cycle into mere years. And while new policies may bring manufacturing back onshore, these will not be the factories of our grandparents. They will be Manufacturing 4.0 plants, run by robotic labor, sensors, and software, with a handful of engineers overseeing what once required thousands of assembly line workers. Jobs may return in name, but not in number leaving us to confront a stark truth: are we preparing citizens for a future where "work" itself is fundamentally redefined, or are we clinging to a past that is already gone?

The economic consequences of inaction are obvious. As displaced workers turn to safety nets, society will face rising costs just as tax revenues shrink. Corporate profits may soar, but loopholes and low corporate tax rates mean those gains will not be widely shared. This is more than unemployment. It is the structural unraveling of an economic model built for another era.

Here is a dangerous paradox: the pain of disruption will be carried by the many, while the rewards of AI will be concentrated in the hands of the few. The looming productivity windfall will be captured by those who own the platforms, while the social costs are pushed onto everyone else. Efficiency rises, profits climb, but social inequality deepens. Do we want this?

Philosophy teaches us that history does not simply happen to us; it is shaped by the immediate collective choices we make. We can choose to allow AI's simulations and automations to hollow out work, learning, and meaning. Or we can choose to pause, reflect, and rewrite the rules. With fresh approaches to AI ownership, taxation, and preserving public benefit, AI's immense potential could be harnessed as a shared resource, fueling broad prosperity rather than deepening divides. Instead of drifting passively toward peril, we can actively design a future in which technology expands while humanity endures at the center. A collaboration of IQ and AI.

The question is no longer whether AI will change our world, it already has. Rather, will we summon the imagination and courage to decide how? If we act now, with clarity and resolve, AI can become not our undoing but our greatest opportunity: a chance to build a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable world. The choice is ours, time is short, let's act now.

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