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AI Is Being Built to Replace You—Not Help You

Nobel Prize-winning economist Daron Acemoglu warns that multiple factors are driving a labor-replacement model, with potentially dire consequences for society.

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He agrees that recent advances, particularly in “agentic” AI, are moving faster than expected, but that today’s systems fall short when it comes to reliability, reasoning and real-world understanding. That means any sweeping, immediate transformation of jobs and productivity remains unlikely in the near-term. But the uncertainty about what comes next is higher than ever, and Acemoglu warns that tech giants are overwhelmingly focused on replacing workers rather than complementing them. This, Acemoglu says, risks both weaker productivity gains and serious social consequences.

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He argues that the greatest economic benefits would come from “pro-worker AI” that enhances human capabilities, enabling workers to perform more complex and valuable tasks. But current business incentives, market structures and policy frameworks favor labor replacement. Without a shift in direction, he cautions, large-scale job displacement—particularly among white-collar workers—could strain labor markets, depress wages and destabilize democratic institutions.