

AI, Disruption, and the Pattern of Prosperity

There is a great deal of fear circulating about artificial intelligence eliminating major categories of jobs. I understand the anxiety. Any transformative technology creates disruption. But when I look back across history — electricity, industrial production, the internet, cellular networks — I see a very different long-term pattern. Each of those breakthroughs displaced certain roles, yet each one ultimately created entire industries that previously did not exist.

Electricity automated physical labor and extended productive hours. Industrialization reduced agricultural labor from nearly half the workforce to a tiny fraction. The internet eliminated travel agents, classifieds, and video stores, but it created cybersecurity, cloud architecture, digital marketing, e-commerce logistics, and countless other fields. We adapted. The economy expanded. Human productivity increased.

AI is another general-purpose technology. It is powerful, yes — but it is not without precedent in its structural impact. The real shift is not job destruction; it is task transformation. Most jobs are bundles of tasks involving judgment, context, coordination, and accountability. AI can automate components of work, but entire roles rarely disappear overnight. Instead, they evolve.

What may make this transition feel different is speed. Previous revolutions unfolded over decades. AI improves quarter by quarter. That acceleration may create temporary dislocation. Certain routine cognitive roles will shrink. But history suggests that as the cost of intelligence drops, new forms of value creation rise.

When electricity lowered the cost of power, we built appliances, factories, and infrastructure. When computing lowered the cost of calculation, we built software and networks. When the internet lowered the cost of communication, we built digital economies. AI lowers the cost of reasoning.

Lowering the cost of reasoning will likely increase productivity across medicine, logistics, disaster response, research, education, and entrepreneurship. Small teams will accomplish what once required large organizations. New hybrid professions will emerge — AI workflow designers, model auditors, integration architects, and roles we cannot yet name.

The real risk is not permanent unemployment. The risk is friction during transition — mismatches between old skills and new demands. But societies that invest in adaptation historically emerge stronger. Productivity gains tend to expand overall output, even if the path is uneven.

I do not see AI as an apocalypse. Nor do I see it as effortless utopia. I see it as another inflection point in a long human story: technology disrupts, humans recombine, the economy expands.

If history is any guide, artificial intelligence will follow the same pattern. The challenge is not whether new work will exist. The challenge is whether we are prepared to evolve quickly enough to capture it.

