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End of Instrumentalism through the lens of a teacher.

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Humans consider themselves being "the most intelligent" among other species. This is what they think makes them special in the entire universe. Intelligence and reasoning are what gives them a sense of power, a sense of uniqueness. However, the arrival of Artificial Intelligence (AI) threatened humans to take away the only distinctive power humanity has today.

Throughout the history, a series of theories were suggested that humbled human beings. First, Copernicus, a Renaissance polymath who formulated a model of the universe, claimed that it is actually the Sun that is in the center of the universe, not the Earth. Basically, saying that our home, the Earth, is nothing special. Second, Charles Darwin, an English naturalist, geologist and biologist, developed a theory of human evolution, claiming that humans are just a more evolved version of apes, that there is nothing special about human physiology either.

This startled the humanity. Each humbling led us to rethink the concept of a human being. What is the role of humans? If we are not the center of the universe as Copernicus said, and if we are not any different physiologically than animals as Darwin claimed, then at least we are special because we have reasoning. At least, we are a better version of apes, the most productive, the most evolved. That's where we tied a lot of our self-worth. The ability to think makes us special, unique from the rest of the universe.

However, today, now that AI has shown a rapid development in pattern recognition and human reasoning simulation, people have become fearful of losing their jobs, because AI is threatening to take away that only unique power humans think they have. The problem is a lot bigger than just an economic concern. In a capitalistic world, work, success and achievement are what bring meaning and existential fulfillment to humans. It is as if AI is about to rob people off of this source of meaning and value that humans bring to the world. But can it actually?

Let’s try to answer the question that we had earlier through the lens of philosophy. What is the role of humans? In intellectual history, the attitude towards work has been dismissive. Plato in the West and Confucius in the East, both lowered the commercial class, people who have to work for sustenance, and elevated dignified leisure, which, in turn, is not merely a passive rest or recreation, but a practice of using free time for meaningful, self-improving and intrinsically valuable activities, such as doing art, going to the theatre, reading philosophy, questioning and thinking. Rooted in the ancient philosophy of Aristotle — schole — it views leisure not purely as "time off from work," but as the highest purpose of human life.

In his famous work, the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle stated that every human action aims at some good. He divided goods into two categories. Instrumental goods, things like money, fame and political power. We only want them to achieve something else (e.g., we want money to buy comfort). Second category is intrinsic goods. In a chain of goals (e.g., studying to pass an exam, passing an exam to graduate, graduating to get a job), intrinsic goods represent the final destination. For example,

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things like happiness, pleasure, friendship, knowledge and virtue are traditionally considered intrinsic goods because we seek them because they are inherently good, not just for a secondary benefit.

Coming back to the question "What is the fate of teachers in a world of AI?", we can divide teacher responsibilities into two categories: instrumental contributions and higher human contributions.

Instrumental tasks	**Intrinsic tasks**
Creating a lesson plan	Incorporating personal storytelling and lived experiences into lessons
Grading assignments	Reviewing complex essays, art and creative projects for nuance
Tracking academic progress	Delivering sensitive, constructive feedback with empathy and encouragement
Designing exam materials	Leading collaborative debates, philosophical discussions and group projects
Drafting routine emails	Resolving interpersonal conflicts, bullying and behavioral issues
Tracking daily attendance	Celebrating student breakthroughs and building a safe, inclusive community

Teaching is fundamentally built on human connection. AI lacks emotional intelligence, cultural empathy and authentic moral judgment. However, it serves as an incredibly efficient administrative assistant. It excels on pattern recognition, data synthesis and rapid text generation, which helps teachers outsource the repetitive, time-consuming tasks that traditionally cause a burnout. AI frees up hours of a teacher's week.

On the other hand, a teacher can notice student's subtle sigh of frustration, sense their anxiety and prompt that "ah ha" moment. Only a human teacher can model resilience, teach ethics, navigate complex social dynamics and inspire a lifelong love of learning through a real human-to-human mentorship.

In conclusion, through the lens of Aristotle's philosophy, AI is to be welcomed. This is because everything that's instrumental can be outsourced to AI and robots, which leaves teacher with the activities that they were initially meant to be doing. Teachers have to be the ones reading materials with students, helping them digest it, analyze, evaluate, compare and discuss it for it to elevate their knowledge and souls. Instrumentalism is to sustain the system to maintain the work process. Teachers should not fear AI. Instead, they should learn how to manage and efficiently incorporate it to modify the learning process. Used correctly, AI will be a valuable contribution to the education system where teachers will gain more freedom to be creative and do what only humans are best at doing – nurturing future minds, building their character and helping them grow as independently thinking individuals.

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