

ChatGBT. Is this the beginning of the end for humanity? Whoa! Not quite yet. Not for several centuries, I'd suspect. We have more serious problems facing us today. Namely, Climate Change and the International Refugee crisis.

Still, AI should be a concern. It's obviously an asset much sought after. It promises the holder of such technology a greater control of folks and events. Humanity doesn't need control freaks like Putin or Donald Trump to have access to the ultimate AI. But would Google, Facebook or Chinese spy bots be any better?

I've just finished an intriguing book called "Titan" by Mado Nozaki. The narrative occurs in the 23rd-century where AIs have eliminated "work" and humans enjoy unprecedented prosperity. (I know it's a bit far-fetched. In reality, there will always be a need for 30% of the population to act as troubleshooters, repairpersons or upgraders.) But let's assume, as a thought experiment, that AI can takeover and provide a limitless cornucopia of goods and services, all the while doing so without trashing the environment.

The main character of "Titan" is Dr. Naisho who is an amateur psychologist, since there are no longer any jobs. Her main hobby is hosting a popular, Zoomlike psychology workshop where her lectures are much admired. Early in the novel, she is hoodwinked to accepting her first-ever job. It involves one of the 12 AIs that run and oversee the Titan network. It seems the Coeus AI (located in Japan) is underperforming compared to the other eleven. Dr. Naisho joins a team of four: program engineer, philosopher, team leader and herself.

The Titan network handles food services, travel services, health services and recreational services. Humans have everything at their beck & call. Crime rates have dropped dramatically, and life spans have increased beyond 100 years. To alleviate boredom, everyone has hobbies. Dr. Naisho likes to take old-fashioned photographs which must be developed as negatives then printed.

Her job is to give psychological counseling to Coeus who has been underperforming. The AI is tasked with a tremendous amount of detailed services for a billion human end-users. Twelve AIs for roughly 12 billion humans. Each AI is busy performing a multitude of tasks. So the first thing is to get Coeus to manifest as a personality. The 1st-attempt has him manifesting as a glob of water in midair which falls to the ground and evaporates. After a few weeks, Dr. Naisho gets Coeus to appear in humanlike form and eventually to speak. He is kind of a bashful child about ten-years-old.

I don't want to spoil the plot, but let's just say the relation between Dr. Naisho and Coeus progresses, and he matures to some degree. The book becomes a clever examination of the concept of work. For example, are hobbies work? I can identify with "hobbies" since I'm a would-be author collecting Canada pension. My royalties are small compared to my pension checks. My purpose in pursuing a career as an author alleviates boredom and gives me a sense of fulfillment. Am I truly working or just killing time?

In a basic physical sense, work is defined as a force pushing an object in a direction. So you need force plus measurable displacement, such as a dumbbell upraised one meter. How does this definition relate to artistic works? Do authors, musicians or painters move something or someone? Maybe they exert influence on the human heart.

In any case, I recommend "Titan" which examines how work can bring us fulfillment in life.