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# What if artificial intelligence is just a “normal” technology?

Its rise might yet follow the path of previous technological revolutions

**O**PINIONS ABOUT artificial intelligence tend to fall on a wide spectrum. At one extreme is the utopian view that AI will cause runaway economic growth, accelerate scientific research and perhaps make humans immortal. At the other extreme is the dystopian view that AI will cause abrupt, widespread job losses and economic disruption, and perhaps go rogue and wipe out humanity. So a paper published earlier this year by Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor, two computer scientists at Princeton University, is notable for the unfashionably sober manner in which it treats AI: as “normal technology”. The work has prompted much debate among AI researchers and economists.

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But many people, on reading this rejection of AI exceptionalism, will nod in agreement. The middle-ground view is less dramatic than predictions of an imminent “fast take-off” or apocalypse, so tends not to receive much attention. That is why the authors think it worthwhile to articulate this position: because they believe that “some version of our worldview is widely held”. Amid current worries about the sustainability of AI investment, their paper makes for a refreshingly dull alternative to AI hysteria. ■