

Very Briefly Noted:

- **John Quiggin:** [The Not-So-Strange Death of Multifactor Productivity Growth](#): “Improvements in information and communications technology (ICT) and in labour quality represent “embodied” technological progress”. The seeming paradox of continued labour productivity growth combined with static MFP...
- **Harold James:** [What Happens After the War?](#): “Figuring out Ukraine’s post-conflict future will be essential not just for the Ukrainian victims of Russia’s invasion, but also for Europe and the world at large. Heeding the lessons of the twentieth-century, today’s victors must proceed in the spirit of the Marshall Plan, not the Treaty of Versailles”
- **Joyeuse Noelle:** [An Increasingly Less Brief Guide to Mastodon](#):

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**Ethan Mollick:** [The street finds its own uses for things, AI Edition](#): *Breakthrough innovations often come from people who use technology, not create it. So, how are students using AI?*: “Since I introduced AI to my class a couple of weeks ago, my students have described dozens of uses that I never expected. I thought I would list of few of them”.  
**Making new things**. By the end of the class one of my students, Kirill Naumov, had created a working demo for his entrepreneurship project - a [program that would automatically detect a face and play a video clip](#) - using a code library he had never used before, in less than half the time it would otherwise have taken. [AI is very, very good at helping people code](#).  
**Explaining concepts**. **Correcting errors**: Students mentioned feeding problems they got incorrect on tests or problem sets to the AI to better understand what they were doing wrong. They then asked for a corrections and explanations. **As a model to overcome inertia & uncertainty**. **As a source of inspiration**. **As a summary tool**: ChatGPT is remarkably good at summarizing large blocks of academic text, material from user interviews, transcripts from meetings, and so on. The lessons of user innovation is that technology is only really useful when it is used. Thanks to ChatGPT, practical AI is available to everyone. To understand why that may matter, think about a much less capable system - Excel. As anyone in an organization knows, Excel is already the ad hoc programming language of the office workers, because few of them know Python, but many of them understand Excel. With easy-to-use AI, everyone will be applying it to the problems they want to solve. It won’t work in every case, but it will in many cases. And the impacts are likely to be unexpected and widespread. Keep your eyes open.

**Mariana Mazzucato:** [Most Recommended Books of 2022](#): “[How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate](#). By [Isabella M. Weber](#): **Weber** “set out to write *How China Escaped Shock Therapy* to shed light on one of the most consequential economic-policy debates of the past century – namely, the struggle among Chinese reformers over how to recreate markets.” **Mariana Mazzucato** says: “fascinating history of Chinese capitalism [which] offers crucial insights into a local approach to economic thinking that steered clear of neoliberal fallacies”

**Matt Yglesias:** [Secret Congress delivers more good news on clean water](#): “Clean Water fans got more good news this December as the Water Resources Development Act of 2022 was [incorporated into the National Defense Authorization Act and passed](#) on December 15. It’s a bit of a legislative Christmas tree, as you’d expect from something that ends up with 88 votes in the Senate, but [all the major environmental groups](#) are endorsing it. The things Congress authorizes in these big bills tend not to end up fully funded when the annual appropriations cycle comes around. So excitement around a big comprehensive bill inevitably has an element of overstatement. The point, though, is that the Water Resources Development Act does a bunch of useful things. It also reflects, I think, most people’s broad sense of how politics “ought to work” it addresses a bunch of topics that earnest progressive activists have put on the radar, but in a non-radical, business-friendly way it emphasizes bipartisanship and problem-solving rather than revolution. Some horses were traded, some deals were struck, the ball is moved forward. The larger bipartisan NDAA [was not] the major story. The major story is always some form of ugly fighting, and because Congress wasn’t doing much ugly fighting, the main story instead became Elon Musk. One of my theses (developed with Simon Bazelon) has been that this is not a coincidence – it’s [easier for Congress to get things done when it’s quiet](#), but having most of the good parts of politics languish in obscurity feeds cynicism, just as few people know the underlying story of improving water.”

**Edward Luce:** [The meaning of Ron DeSantis: Trump’s most serious rival is key to the future of Trumpism](#): “An enduring debate about Donald Trump is whether he stands for a clear ideology or just for Donald Trump. The latter was never in doubt. But it has taken Ron DeSantis, Florida’s governor and the former US president’s chief rival, to fashion a worldview from Trump’s gut instincts. It is Trump’s likeliest nemesis, other than himself, who is doing the most to build Trumpism into a lasting force. Many of the right’s biggest donors, including Peter Thiel, the Koch family and Ken Griffin, are backing DeSantis. Those who hope the Republican party will revert to its pre-Trump character after he has gone are missing the plot. In some ways, DeSantis is even further removed than Trump from the party of Ronald Reagan.. You might describe DeSantis’s philosophy as fossil fuel Christian nationalism. Its enemies are amoral tech oligarchs, Big Pharma, ESG-endorsing finance, the corporate media and elite universities. Since Trump does exist, we call it Trumpism. The difference lies in the competence of its execution”

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