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The Majority AI View

Even though AI has been the most-talked-about topic in tech for a few years now, we're in an unusual situation where *the most common opinion* about AI within the tech industry is barely ever mentioned.

Most people who actually have technical roles within the tech industry, like engineers, product managers, and others who actually make the technologies we all use, are fluent in the latest technologies like LLMs. They aren't the big, loud billionaires that usually get treated as the spokespeople for all of tech.

And what they all share is an extraordinary degree of consistency in their feelings about AI, which can be pretty succinctly summed up:

Technologies like LLMs have utility, but the absurd way they've been over-hyped, the fact they're being forced on everyone, and the insistence on ignoring the many valid critiques about them make it very difficult to focus on legitimate uses where they might add value.

What's amazing is the reality that virtually *100% of tech experts* I talk to in the industry feel this way, yet nobody outside of that cohort will mention this reality. What we all want is for people to just treat AI as a "[normal technology](#)", as Arvind Naryanan and Sayash Kapoor so perfectly put it. I might be a little more angry and a little less eloquent: stop being so goddamn creepy and weird about the technology! It's just tech, everything doesn't have to become some weird religion that you beat people over the head with, or gamble the entire stock market on.

AI Hallucinations

If you read mainstream media about AI, or trade press within the tech industry, you'll basically only hear hype repeating the default stories about products from the handful of biggest companies like OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, and the like. Once in a while, you might hear some coverage of the critiques of AI, but even those will generally be from people outside the tech industry, and they will often solely be about frustrations or anger with the negative externalities of the centralized Big AI companies. Those are valid and vital critiques, but it's especially galling to ignore the voices within the tech industry when the first and most credible critiques of AI came from people who were working within the big tech companies and then got pushed out for sharing accurate warnings about what could go wrong.

Perhaps the biggest cost of ignoring the voices of the reasonable majority of those in tech is how it has grossly limited the universe of possibilities for the future. If we were to simply listen to the smart voices of those who aren't lost in the hype cycle, we might see that it is *not* inevitable that AI systems use content without the consent of creators, and it is *not* impossible to build AI systems that respect commitments to environmental sustainability. We can build AI that [isn't centralized under the control of a handful of giant companies](#). Or any other definition of "[good AI](#)" that people might aspire to. But instead, we end up with the *worst*, most anti-social approaches because the platforms that have introduced "AI" to the public imagination are run by authoritarian extremists with deeply destructive agendas.

And their extremism has had a profound chilling effect within the technology industry. One of the reasons we don't hear about this most popular, moderate view on AI within the tech industry is because **people are afraid to say it**. Mid-level managers and individual workers who know this is the common-sense view on AI are concerned that simply saying that they think AI is a normal technology like any other, and should be subject to the same critiques and controls, and be viewed with the same skepticism and care, fear for their careers. People worry that not being seen as mindless, uncritical AI cheerleaders will be a career-limiting move in the current environment of enforced conformity within tech, especially as tech leaders are collaborating with the current regime to punish free speech, fire anyone who dissents, and embolden the wealthy tycoons at the top to make ever-more-extreme statements, often at the direct expense of some of their own workers.

This is all exacerbated by the awareness that hundreds of thousands of technical staff like engineers have been laid off in recent times, often in an ongoing drip of never-ending layoffs, and very frequently in an unnecessarily dehumanizing and brutal process intended to instill fear in those who remain at the companies afterward.

In that kind of context, it's understandable that people might fear telling the truth. But it's important to remember that *there are a lot more of us*. And for those who aren't insiders in the tech industry, it's vital that you understand that you've been presented with an extremely distorted view about what tech workers really think about AI. Very few agree with the hype bubble that the tycoons have been trying to puff up. There are certainly a group of hustle bros on LinkedIn or social media trying to become influencers by repeating the company line, just as they did about Web3 or the metaverse or the blockchain (do they still have .ETH after their names?), but the mainstream of tech culture is thoughtful, nuanced and circumspect.

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