

Harry Potter and the Technology Landscape

By

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“Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you’d expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn’t hold with such nonsense.”¹ This is how J.K. Rowling’s magical story of Harry Potter begins, by telling us about the ordinary family that is reluctantly raising a very special boy who is destined to become one of witchcraft and wizardry’s most extraordinary magicians ever. Harry was born with magical abilities, yet the Dursleys spent years trying to convince him he shouldn’t use them.

I can empathize with Harry because these days there are a lot of people like the Dursleys shaming and telling all of us not to use our extraordinary powers. “Mr. Dursley pulls Harry aside, ‘I’m warning you,’ putting his large purple face right up close to Harry’s, ‘I’m warning you now, boy—any funny business, anything at all—and you’ll be in that cupboard from now until Christmas.’”² It’s true, the Dursleys often locked Harry in a small cupboard under the stairs, so they didn’t have to think about him. That’s how afraid of his magic they were.

The Dursleys’ attitude toward magic is analogous to how many people today feel about using technology, especially Artificial Intelligence. When, for example, Gloria Caulfield, a real estate executive who was invited to address graduates of the University of Central Florida’s College of Arts and Humanities, told the assembled students that “the rise of artificial intelligence is the next industrial revolution,” she was met with an eruption of boos. One voice rang clearly through the noise: “AI sucks!” When Caulfield said, “Only a few years ago, AI was not a factor in our lives,” the crowd cheered. The same thing happened only weeks later when former Google CEO Eric Schmidt mentioned Time Magazine had named the architects of Artificial Intelligence its person of the year during his commencement speech at the University of Arizona.

I understand where they’re coming from: AI may prove to be the most powerful tool humans have ever created. I’ve even heard some compare it to the discovery of fire. But whether we are playing with fire again or not, AI is explosive, by which I mean it is improving much faster than any technology ever has, often faster than our rules, regulations, ethics, and understanding can keep up with. So, if, like the Dursleys, you prefer normalcy, AI is not your friend because everything is changing fast and it’s only getting faster.

In Harry’s world, non-magical people are called Muggles, but the Dursleys are a particular kind of Muggle, the kind who fear and despise what they don’t understand. In reality, as philosopher Heraclitus told us centuries ago, nothing ever stays the same for any of us. “You can’t step twice

into the same river.” And, as scary as the unknown future might be, toolmaking, including AI, is our species’ specialty. As author, inventor, and futurist Ray Kurzweil says, “No other tool-using animal on Earth has demonstrated the ability to create and retain innovations in their use of tools.”³ Toolmaking is what we do. Toolmakers is what we are.

Like me, Kurzweil has also made a connection between our technology and Harry Potter. “These tales may be imaginary,” he writes, “but they are not unreasonable visions of our world as it will exist only a few decades from now. Essentially all of the Potter ‘magic’ will be realized through the technologies I will explore in this book.”⁴ He’s talking about his bestselling 2005 book, *The Singularity is Near*, about the exponential advancement of technology leading to a point in the very near future where artificial intelligence surpasses human intellect and where we merge with that intelligence, a point beyond which it’s impossible to imagine.

As enthusiastic as I am about the Singularity and our future, I understand how intimidating that kind of change and uncertainty can feel. But the answer cannot be trying to lock it away or to pretend it isn’t happening. As Reid Hoffman and Greg Beato write in their 2025 book *Superagency: What Could Possibly Go Right with Our AI Future*, “You’ll never get the future you want simply by prohibiting the future you don’t want.”⁵ To help create a positive future, rather than fear we need two motivators; hope and the belief in our own agency. We need to believe that we really can make a difference.

And this brings us back to Harry Potter. Those familiar with the story know that nobody in it is capable of performing magic without a crucial piece of technology—a wand. Before any student can attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, they must first obtain a wand. It’s at Hogwarts that they will learn the proper spells and incantations for using it. In real life, a wand is like AI, a spell is like a prompt, and Hogwarts represents our commitment to learning how to use this technology intelligently, responsibly, and for the good of others.

It’s not about locking away our powers and pretending they don’t exist. It’s not about avoiding the technology. It’s about using it wisely for the good of humanity. And we better because if Kurzweil is right, and he’s been right about most of his forecasts, the Singularity is not only near but—as is the title of his 2024 follow-up book—*The Singularity is Nearer*. “Once a computer achieves a human level of intelligence it will necessarily soar past it,”⁶ Kurzweil says, which he predicts will occur in the early 2030s. Soon thereafter, as he puts it, is when “Essentially all of the Potter ‘magic’ will be realized.”

How you feel about such a future determines whether you are a Doomer, Gloomer, Zoomer, or Bloomer when it comes to technology, especially Artificial Intelligence. Faced with

extraordinary new powers, rapid change, and the unknown, most of us instinctively fall into one of these four camps.

Doomers believe advanced AI poses an existential threat to humanity, potentially leading to catastrophe or even our extinction. Their instinct is to halt or dramatically slow its development until it can be proven completely safe.

Gloomers don't necessarily fear extinction. Instead, they worry AI will more immediately diminish our lives by costing us meaningful work, creativity, privacy, relationships, and social trust. They don't reject technology itself so much as they fear what people will do with it.

Zoomers believe the benefits of AI far outweigh its risks. They want innovation to move as quickly as possible with minimal restraint, trusting markets, entrepreneurs, and technological progress to solve any related problems as they arise.

Bloomers share the zoomers' optimism but pair it with wisdom and intention. They believe technology should flourish, but only alongside ethics, education, and a commitment to human flourishing. Rather than racing recklessly ahead or retreating in fear, bloomers believe we can shape the future into one that is beneficial and meaningful for us all.

Arthur C. Clarke famously said that “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic,” which, again, makes Harry Potter the perfect metaphor for further exploring these four attitudes about technology, and why, from here on, I’ll treat these two words synonymously; When I speak about magic, I’m also talking about technology—and vice versa.

When it comes to magic, the Dursleys are excellent examples of doomers. They fear it, don't want to see it, let alone use it, and seek to shame, isolate, and punish anyone who does. Early in the story, for example, they debate whether to take Harry with them to the zoo for Dudley's birthday because they worry what might happen if they leave him home alone.

“I won’t blow up the house,” said Harry, but they weren’t listening.

“I suppose we could take him to the zoo,” said Aunt Petunia slowly, “. . . and leave him in the car. . . .”

“That car’s new, he’s not sitting in it alone. . . .”

“I . . . don’t . . . want . . . him . . . t-t-to come!” Dudley yelled between huge, pretend sobs. “He always spoils everything!”⁷

No matter what decision they make, doomers always imagine the worst possible outcomes. Fear becomes their default response to the uncertain future.

Moving on, I got into a small debate with Claude AI about who is the best example of a gloomer. When I suggested Professor Severus Snape, Claude pushed back. “Snape is one of the most

skilled wizards in the books. He believes deeply in magic's power and uses it constantly, often brilliantly ... and his gloominess is more about personality and personal history than about a worldview that magic itself is problematic.”

That’s fair, but I still think Snape’s a good choice, not because of his gloomy appearance and demeanor, but because he constantly expects Harry and his friends to misuse it. He doesn’t doubt the power of magic, but he often suspects the skills and motives of those using it. He doesn't fear magic itself, that is, he fears what people will do with it.

Claude suggested a better gloomer match might be professor Mad-Eye Moody, who is suspicious of every spell and every wizard and sees threats everywhere, but still uses magic himself because he has to. Or Argus Filch—the Squib caretaker who resents wizards because he can't do magic himself and would happily punish students who can. Maybe so, but I’m sticking with Professor Snape. Most gloomers use technology even though they are convinced humanity will ultimately misuse it; leaving the world poorer, colder, and less human than before.

As for zoomers—those so enthusiastic about technology they want to sprint ahead with few guardrails—Claude AI and I agree, the best examples in the Harry Potter story are Fred and George Weasley. The twin brothers are endlessly inventive. They experiment constantly, delight in pushing boundaries, and treat magic as an endless playground for creativity. Their joke shop is essentially a magical startup company, so they would fit right in at Silicon Valley.

Of course, not every invention works as they intended. They test products on unsuspecting first-year students, occasionally create more chaos than they anticipated, and often seem to believe it's better to ask forgiveness than permission. Fortunately, Fred and George are fundamentally kind-hearted. Their inventions are usually intended to bring joy, laughter, and wonder, not exploitation or harm. Still, their out-of-control antics remind us that enthusiasm alone isn't enough. Like so much else, technology must advance through trial and error. Yet those developing it must still remain cautious, not careless.

This leads us to the bloomers, those who are optimistic about technology's ability to improve the future, but only if we intentionally guide it toward human flourishing.

In this sense, nearly every student at Hogwarts is a bloomer because they're there to learn how to use their extraordinary powers responsibly. Their education isn't really about mastering spells. It's about developing the wisdom and character necessary to wield those powers well.

Star students like Harry Potter and Hermione Granger embody this attitude perfectly. They certainly make serious mistakes, like the time Harry used a dangerous curse he stumbled upon and didn't yet fully understand and nearly killed Draco Malfoy. Thankfully, Professor Snape

arrived in time to save him.. But Harry learned from this mistake and became a wiser and more careful wizard in the process. Harry and Hermione both understand that possessing power is only the beginning. Their real purpose at Hogwarts is learning to use that power wisely, responsibly, and for the good of others.

That's the attitude that separates bloomers from the others. They don't fear technology. Quite the opposite, they place much hope in it. Yet they also understand that these extraordinary tools and the powers they give us require wisdom and character, which means aligning their use with human values and welfare above anything else.

This is why I consider Hogwarts such a helpful metaphor for the age we're in. A wand is like AI. A spell is like a prompt. (Both work just about as fast.) And Hogwarts is where we develop the character to use both wisely.

But if you still think “magic” is too flattering a comparison to technology, then you won't like the word Peter Diamandis and Steven Kotler use to describe it in their new audaciously titled book, *We Are As Gods*. They call the powers these technologies give us nothing short of miraculous. They begin with a long list of all the kinds of miracles various religions ascribe to their gods, then describe all the technologies allowing us mere mortals to perform the same kinds of miracles today. “These divine powers are everywhere and everywhen,” they say. “They're now in your pocket. You carry miracle tech in your jeans and handbag. You can summon a chariot of the gods disguised as an Uber with a finger tap and conjure up a feast via Uber Eats with another. You have answers to nearly every question in seconds. Translation, navigation, simulation—it's all on demand.”⁸

Yet Diamandis and Kotler wonder why, “If we are literally walking the earth in an age of miracles, how come we don't feel divine?”⁹ For a worthwhile discussion of this question, I recommend reading *We Are As Gods* for yourself. For now, one important point they make is that most of us barely notice our new superpowers. “You wouldn't know it from reading the headlines,” they say:

Instead, we find dystopia in every direction ... They focus on the threat the technology brings to our economy, our political stability, our very survival. There are similar fears that video games will rot our minds, text messages will destroy our language skills, and robots will steal our jobs. This constant drumbeat of dread has reshaped our collective mood. Mental health disorders are at record highs.¹⁰

The result, they say, “Even after five pages of human-created biblical miracles, we don’t feel blessed. We feel besieged. Most of us still believe that today is worse than yesterday, and best not think of tomorrow.”¹¹

In short, when it comes to technology, there is way too much doom and gloom in our society for us to appreciate our powers or believe we can guide them in a positive direction. Personally, I counter the negative news cycle by intentionally looking for good news stories, especially about technology. It’s that easy. Seek and ye shall find. I don’t ignore the negative. It’s always right in front of us. But if we work to overcome our fear-based neurology and instincts, we’ll see plenty of good, too.

Some of the stories that have recently caught my eye include multiple stories about how AI is being used to develop novel antibiotics to combat drug-resistant diseases, and how it’s being used for early detection of pancreatic and other once hard to find cancers, at least in the early stages. There’s a joint venture between Johns Hopkins and a university in Uganda, for example, that’s using low-cost technologies to improve early cancer diagnosis and treatment within that nation’s underserved population, one in which breast cancer has too often proven unnecessarily fatal.

There’s AI tech that now instantly translates for the deaf and that helps the blind navigate their environments without any other kind of assistance. It’s also beginning to address our severe shortage of mental health professionals by providing supervised therapy in the many places where human therapists simply aren’t available. Millions who would otherwise receive no mental health support at all can now access it. Likewise, AI is now being used to safely refill routine prescriptions without requiring a doctor’s visit, making medications cheaper, sparing patients the difficulty of scheduling appointments with physicians who are also in short supply, and freeing overworked doctors to spend their valuable time with the patients who need them most. Overall, according to the 2026 Future Health Index, AI now allows doctors to see five more patients on average per week, while also overcoming staffing shortages and reducing medical expenses.

AI is being used to better separate recyclables from our trash, so we waste far less of it. There’s also a recent story about a 15-year-old high school student in Ontario who has built a robotic underwater turtle that quietly moves about using AI to detect coral bleaching, plastic waste, and invasive species with nearly 100 percent accuracy. And did you catch the story about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partnering with a Dallas biotech company (Colossal Biotech) to preserve the genetic blueprint of every endangered species in America so that, if necessary, we can bring them back from extinction?

It's estimated that nearly ninety percent of the writings of antiquity have been lost. Imagine if we could recover some of it. Or, why not all of it? Imagine if we have ninety percent more ancient philosophy! We are on our way. In June of 2026, researches announced they were able to use AI to unwrap several ancient scrolls that are so carbonized it has been impossible to do so without turning them into piles of ash. The result revealed writings, philosophy, and authors previously unknown to history. "We will inquire into something," one statement says, "but we will not grasp it, if in some way we depart from ourselves and from our own nature." Think of all the lost wisdom yet to be unveiled as the result of this wondrous technology.

Among my favorite examples, however, is the recent and widely reported news that AI was used to correctly diagnose eighteen patients who, like hundreds of millions around the world, had lived for years without knowing what was wrong with them or how to treat their conditions. One of them was a girl named Kyra, who started slowing down in karate class at age nine. By thirteen she was in a wheelchair and dependent on a ventilator. For nearly two decades, specialists at multiple institutions examined her and found no answer. Then an AI model looked at genomic data that human experts had already reviewed and set aside—and found the culprit, a rare variant in a single gene. Myofibrillar myopathy. A name, at last, for what had been happening to her body since childhood.

Tell me, who has the moral right to take those answers, diagnoses, treatments, even cures away from those who desperately need them? Who has the right to take that answer away from Kyra? Who has the right to prevent a high schooler from helping to find the sickest places beneath the sea so we can begin to heal them? Who has the right to prevent us from bringing back the species our own shortsightedness has driven to extinction? Or the right to benefit from the wisdom of our ancestors? And, even more importantly, who would want to?

Today, in this age of powerful technology, whether we call it magic or miraculous, there are countless stories of how it is being put to use in beneficial ways. Yet there are also far too many Dursleys in the world wanting us to try stuffing the Genie back in the bottle, or to bottle up our enthusiasm if not our own ability to make positive differences in our lives and in our world.

The fear is real and some of it is based on reality. There is much to worry about in the world. But worrying about it doesn't make a difference. Those sorts of emotions, if they don't lead us to act in positive ways, only make matters worse for ourselves. They can even make us sick. The proper response to our anxieties, rather, is to do what we can, not merely to prevent our worst fears from coming true, but to work to achieve our greatest hopes. Again, we'll never have the future we want by simply prohibiting the future we don't want. To create the future we do want, we have to think positively, believing that we have the power and agency to make a real

difference. And today, more than ever, we really do have the magical, miraculous power to turn our hopes into reality.

So don't be a Dursley and don't allow the Dursleys of the world to convince you to stuff your powers in a cupboard beneath the stairs of progress. Grab your wand and climb those stairs. Or, better yet, hop into your flying car and head to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and learn to use your unprecedented powers for the good of humanity and all the other wondrous creatures we share our planet with. You are a magical witch or wizard. So go out and do some good.

¹ Rowling, J.K.. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (p. 1). Pottermore Publishing. Kindle Edition

² Ibid., p. 24.

³ Kurzweil, Ray, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, Viking Press, New York, NY, 1999., p. 23.

⁴ Kurzweil, Ray, *The Singularity is Near*, Viking Press, New York, NY, 2005., p. 4.

⁵ Beato, Greg; Hoffman, Ried, *Superagency: What Can Possibly Go Right with Our AI Future*, Authors Equity, New York, NY, 2025, p. xiii

⁶ Kurzweil, Ray, *ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷ Rowling, J.K., *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸ Diamandis, Peter H.; Kotler, Steven. *We Are as Gods: A Survival Guide for the Age of Abundance* (Exponential Technology Series) (pp. 9-10). Simon & Schuster. Kindle Edition.

⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 17.