What is AI?

Dr Richard Saldanha
Wednesday 22nd September, iST Online 16:00–17:00 BST

The Institute of Science & Technology's newly formed Special Interest Group on Artificial Intelligence is aimed at people who wish to gain a real understanding of the rapidly developing and extremely broad topic that is referred to as artificial intelligence. In this inaugural seminar, Richard will introduce the Group and go on to share his personal views on what AI is, aims to be and what it currently isn't.

Much of the AI we talk about today falls into the category of 'narrow AI' (also termed 'weak AI' or 'applied AI') but could easily be called machine learning or simply applied mathematics. Such AI systems specialize in solving a single type of problem, or at best a small number of similar problems, and can't be used more generally without redesign. In contrast, a 'strong AI', 'true AI' or 'artificial general intelligence' (AGI) is a hypothetical machine intelligence that exhibits behaviour at least as skillful and flexible – potentially in any real world situation – as a human. In Richard's opinion, we are still decades away from developing an AGI and might always be. Certainly the birth of an AGI has serious implications for the entire planet, quite possibly even beyond our atmosphere.

Richard co-heads Oxquant, a management consulting business involved in AI/ML work in finance and other knowledge-based industries; is a visiting lecturer in statistical machine learning at the School of Economics and Finance, Queen Mary University of London; and serves on and is an adviser to a number of company boards. Richard has worked in quantitative finance for over 20 years and has held senior roles in both asset management and investment banking at major institutions in the City of London. Richard holds a doctorate (DPhil) in Statistics from the University of Oxford and is a Member of the Institute of Science & Technology (MIScT).