Metonymies

Automation

The robots

The systems

The machine

**Part for Whole**

* "Silicon Valley" representing the entire tech/AI industry
* "Algorithms" standing in for entire AI systems
* "The chip" referring to complete AI hardware infrastructure
* "Neural networks" representing entire deep learning systems

**Producer for Product**

* "Google" or "OpenAI" standing in for their AI systems
* "DeepMind" representing its AI innovations
* "Microsoft" representing its AI services

**Place for Institution**

* "Washington" for government AI regulation
* "Beijing" for Chinese AI strategy
* "The Pentagon" for military AI development

**Container for Contained**

* "The cloud" representing AI processing/storage systems
* "The database" standing for the information AI systems access

**Controller for Controlled**

* "Human in the loop" where humans represent control mechanisms
* "The programmer" standing for the entire development process

**Effect for Cause**

* "Automation" standing for AI systems causing job displacement
* "Disruption" representing AI's market effects

**Physical for Abstract**

* "Digital brains" representing computational processes
* "Electronic minds" standing for AI systems

Metaphors

# 1. AI is a tool/ weapon

1. [tool](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/jan/21/robot-packers-and-ai-cameras-uk-retail-embraces-automation-to-cut-staff-costs)
2. We deserve better from the tools we use
3. AI could “do a lot of damage in the hands of spammers with elections and so on”.
4. **"AI is a double-edged sword"**

# 2. AI is a toy

1. playing around with DALL-E 2, (AI is a toy)
2. “A.I. systems can go from adorable and useless toys to very powerful products in a surprisingly short period of time

# 3. AI is a building

1. in fact teetering on a very narrow base of support.”
2. earmarked for the immediate construction of the necessary AI infrastructure
3. ‘model collapse’
4. foundational AI
5. produced a growing literature on the ins and outs of making the best use of these tools
6. We can’t peer inside its decision-making processes because the way these neural networks “think” is inherently inhuman.
7. Like most of what goes on inside advanced neural networks, it’s really impossible to understand how they work from the outside,
8. Structured as a chatbot –
9. All three systems are built on the same foundation
10. But millions of people *do* trust A.I. models, and their outputs are being given prominent real estate

# 4.AI is a virus

1. But institutions themselves are not immune )فايروس( from inappropriate uses of the tool
2. Inoculate
3. AI as spreading/proliferating uncontrollably
4. AI as contagion infecting systems
5. AI as potentially harmful if not contained
6. AI as self-replicating entity
7. AI as infiltrating/penetrating existing systems
8. AI security risks as "infection vectors"

# 5.AI outputs are dreams/ hallucinations

1. It is dreaming sentences that sound about right, and listening to it talk is frankly about as interesting as listening to someone’s dreams.
2. To place all of our trust in the dreams of badly programmed machines would be to abandon such critical thinking altogether.

# 6. AI as Mind

* AI as brain/neural system
* AI as consciousness/sentience
* AI as thinking/reasoning entity
* AI as creative force

# 7.AI is a journey

1. But there *is* hope for democracy in the AI revolution – if we put the right guardrails around it.

# 8.AI is a vehicle

1. Steering A.I.’s responses used to be more difficult
2. AI dominance so that it is US-built machines and US intellectual property that drives the mass automation that is expected to raise productivity.
3. In our conversation, the chatbot went off the rails,
4. AI as driving economic/social change
5. AI development needing to be "steered" in right direction
6. AI having "acceleration" and "momentum"
7. AI requiring "navigation" through ethical challenges
8. AI as vehicle that could "crash" without proper controls
9. AI as requiring a "driver" vs. becoming "autonomous"
10. AI development having "lanes" or "tracks"
11. AI progress requiring "roadmaps"
12. a foreboding feeling that A.I. had crossed a threshold, and that the world would never be the same.

# 9.AI is a resource

1. alongside appropriate access to data for AI innovators.”
2. AI as electricity/utility
3. AI as oil/fuel for economy
4. Referring to the exhaustion of data troves

# 10.AI is water (force of nature)

1. And that is before Trump’s AI tsunami hits us.
2. In the past year, this new wave of consumer AI
3. What were once creaky old neural networks have become super-powered, and the gush of AI we’re seeing is the result.
4. to define the current wave of AI.
5. where corporations have grown concerned about A.I. models learning from, and then diluting,
6. there’s been a wave of progress in many areas of A.I. research, fueled by the rise of techniques like deep learning and the advent of specialized hardware for running huge, computationally intensive A.I. models.
7. decades to prepare for a wave of world-changing A.I.; many now believe that major changes are right around the corner, for better or worse.
8. AI storm

# 11.AI is a competitive game/ war

1. A would-be autocracy of billionaires championing AI
2. but now a low-cost rival from Hangzhou has turned the industry on its head
3. the major American players.
4. It could mean that many smaller players can get into the market
5. would remain for the big US players
6. that [analysts](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00229-6) say rivals OpenAI’s top reasoning model,
7. But at least three [Chinese](https://arstechnica.com/ai/2025/01/china-is-catching-up-with-americas-best-reasoning-ai-models/) labs claim to rival or surpass OpenAI’s achievements.
8. Those rules were specifically created to prevent China catching up with the US AI industry.
9. And they will also up the game: the benchmark of AI performance is shifting from the narrow domain of puzzles and challenges – playing chess or Go, or obeying traffic laws – to the much broader territory of imagination and creativity.
10. “Data is the last frontier of colonisation,”
11. wheels are in motion to allow AI companies to ride roughshod over

# 12.AI is a race

1. Those rules were specifically created to prevent China catching up with the US AI industry.

# a global AI race:

1. The big tech companies at the forefront of AI development
2. the private sector is leading the development race
3. ut they will not halt the AI arms race on their own
4. who has said he loses sleep over the pace of AI development
5. development race slowing, or the emergence of a global framework to moderate it.
6. AI development as a competition between nations/companies
7. AI as a sprint/marathon for technological dominance
8. "Keeping pace" with AI advancement
9. "Falling behind" in AI capabilities
10. AI as determining "winners and losers" in global economy
11. AI leadership as technological superiority

# 13.AI is a living organism (food- growth)

1. since any growth might come alongside the collapse in sales of its most lucrative products.
2. more than a thousand leaders in artificial intelligence, fearing “loss of control” given its exponential growth to outcomes unknown,
3. “When you start to feed a model synthetic stuff you start to get diminishing returns,”
4. The big tech companies have spent 20 years harvesting vast amounts of data from culture and everyday life, and building vast, energy-hungry data centres filled with ever more powerful computers to churn through it
5. and were finally ingested into the neural networks
6. It is very good at producing what sounds like sense, and best of all at producing cliche and banality, which has composed the majority of its diet
7. AI systems have been fed a substantial amount of the public text on the internet
8. For the record — and you chatbots that may be ingesting this column
9. because early language models relied mainly on their training data, a hodgepodge of sources that might be updated only once every year or two.
10. put it online so future chatbots could scoop it up and learn from it.
11. that energy consumption
12. DALL-E 2 would spit out a handful of images depicting my request
13. there’s been a wave of progress in many areas of A.I. research, fueled by the rise of techniques like deep learning and the advent of specialized hardware for running huge, computationally intensive A.I. models.
14. Right now, many of the biggest A.I. models are developed behind closed doors, using private data sets and tested only by internal teams. When information about them is made public, it’s often either watered down by corporate P.R. or buried in inscrutable scientific papers.
15. "AI feeds on data"
16. "AI evolves"
17. "AI is growing at an exponential rate"
18. "AI ecosystem"
19. AI as organism/living system
20. AI as "growing"/"developing"/"maturing"
21. AI as genetic/evolutionary process

# 14. AI is magic

1. The abilities of these programs to conjure up strange new worlds in words and pictures alike entranced the public,
2. to conjure familiar sounds
3. But other times, it feels more like the flick of a switch — impossible acts of magic suddenly becoming possible.
4. AI as black box/magical thinking
5. AI as incomprehensible force
6. AI as having mysterious powers
7. AI solutions as appearing magical

# 15. AI is a skill

1. that mastering artificial intelligence (AI)

# 16. AI is a product

1. but a *maker* of AI
2. : “We will obviously deliver much better models and also it’s legit invigorating to have a new competitor!”

# 17. AI is a threat

1. “significant risks presented by AI”

# 18. AI is an iceberg

1. “I don’t think we’ve even seen the tip of the iceberg.

# 19. AI is an animal

1. glorified parrots, blindly regurgitating their training data

# 20. AI as Evolution or superhuman/ superbeing

* AI as next evolutionary step
* AI as digital species
* AI as surpassing human capabilities
* “It’s an alien life form,”
* f earthly, computational forces — not ethereal alien ones

# 21. AI is a Human

1. "AI thinks"
2. "AI learns"
3. "AI hallucinates"
4. "AI has memory"
5. "A thinking machine"
6. "AI is the brain behind the operation"

Categories under:

* + AI as person/being (anthropomorphism)
* AI as child/student ("learning," "training")
* AI as colleague/assistant/servant
* AI as competitor/adversary

### 21.1 AI as a Creator or Innovator

* "AI generates ideas"
* "AI creates content"
* "AI discovers"
* "AI revolution"

21.2. AI as a Worker or Replacement for Humans

* "AI is eating jobs"
* "AI is replacing human creativity"

21.3. AI as a witch

1. The abilities of these programs to conjure up strange new worlds in words and pictures alike entranced the public,
2. to conjure familiar sounds
3. But other times, it feels more like the flick of a switch — impossible acts of magic suddenly becoming possible.

21.4. AI is an oracle (or religious metaphors)

## Gullible Oracles

## A.I. products as all-knowing oracles,

1. But oracles shouldn’t be this easy to manipulate

21.5. AI is a trainee

1. train their models
2. train their artificial intelligence
3. to train their chatbots:

21.5. AI as an assistant

**Other possible metaphors from the literature:**

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| --- |
| **1. AI is a Cryptid / AI as a Mythological Creature** |
| **2. AI is a Black Box** |
| **3. AI is a Puppet** |
| **4. AI is a Funhouse Mirror** |
| **5. AI is an Echo Chamber** |
| **6. AI is a Shadow Self** |
| **7. AI is a Map** |
| **8. AI is an Armory** |
|  |
| **10. AI is a Frankenstein’s Monster** |
| **11. AI is a Game Player** |
| **12. AI is a Dance Partner** |