



Selected Papers of #AoIR2024:
The 25th Annual Conference of the
Association of Internet Researchers
Sheffield, UK / 30 Oct - 2 Nov 2024

AI AS “UNSTOPPABLE” AND OTHER INEVITABILITY NARRATIVES IN TECH: ON THE ENTANGLEMENT OF INDUSTRY, IDEOLOGY, AND OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURES

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In a world where we are constantly being told that artificial intelligence (AI) is “revolutionizing” entire industries, about to cure all diseases, and on the verge of unlocking the deepest mysteries of the universe, its advancements are sold to us as “unstoppable” and “inevitable” by both supporters and critics alike (Altman, 2023; Fridman, 2024). “If we don’t do it,” we are told, someone else will,” with that “someone” cast not simply as an “other,” but as an adversarial nation, “the enemy” (Fridman, 2024). The anticipated or allegedly already emergent artificial general intelligence (AGI) – algorithms that are said to match or exceed human abilities in multiple domains – is touted as a landmark achievement, described as either the zenith of technoutopianism or the doom of technopessimism. Despite claims of an “unprecedented moment in history,” the rhetoric of mainstream technologists in the AI industry, for whom Fridman has become a vocal spokesperson, is a clear example of *technological determinism* (Chandler, 1995). This belief positions technology as the main driver of societal change, evolving independently of human action along a predetermined singular path. Fridman’s comments also highlight the competitive, zero-sum nature of AI innovation, reminiscent of prior technological races dating back to at least the Cold War. This paper explores whether AI innovation, as framed by Silicon Valley’s technologically deterministic ethos, is the only path for technology development and how the AI industry’s competitive, nationalistic, and xenophobic ethos is shaped: not only by its products but also by AI discourses in Big Tech, (social) media, the academy, policy, and beyond.

Suggested Citation (APA): Tacheva, Z., Appedu, S., & Wright, M. (2024, October). *AI as “Unstoppable” and Other Inevitability Narratives in Tech: on the Entanglement of Industry, Ideology, and Our Collective Futures*. Paper presented at AoIR2024: The 25th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers. Sheffield, UK: AoIR. Retrieved from <http://spir.aoir.org>.

To address these questions, we utilize the Black and Indigenous feminist science, technology, and society studies' framework of "entanglement" (TallBear, 2013; Benjamin, 2019), which enables us to analyze the AI industry and the technological products and discourses it produces not merely as a predefined set of economic entities but as a complex phenomenon that is both materially and socially constructed, technoscientific and sociopolitical, utopian and dystopian, ephemeral and historical, global and local, unpredictable and deterministic, labor-free and labor-intensive. This complexity invariably stems from specific sets of beliefs, objectives, and ideas about the world and has concrete, material consequences especially on the environment and on those among us whose classification into racialized, gendered, and colonized categories it further entrenches. The paradigm of entanglement allows us to view these seemingly oppositional, mutually exclusive, and hierarchical binaries as continuums, spanned by the AI industry simultaneously, thereby challenging the simplistic mode of binary thinking and exposing the complexity of the entanglements in which AI and the encompassing industry engage at different levels of analysis. Following Ruha Benjamin, we are not interested in "disentangling" the apparent differences for the sake of drawing easy distinctions between "good tech" and "bad tech" (Benjamin, 2019); instead, our analysis aims to retain the messiness and complexity of a reality that, contrary to data science's promises, does not easily lend itself to facile categorization. At the actor level, for instance, we find validation for TallBear's observation of the "entanglements that can develop between scientific researchers, industry, and consumers" (TallBear, 2013) and we expand on this by adding the roles of governments and military entities (Crawford, 2021), the significant underbelly of data workers from the global and local Souths, which enables the "AI magic" that OpenAI CEO Sam Altman often praises in the media (Taylor, 2018; Gray & Suri, 2019; Miceli & Posada, 2022), and the environment, which is being exploited, polluted, and destroyed in the pursuit of 'progress' and 'competitive advantage' (Sultana, 2022). To map out the scope of AI industry entanglements, however, we must also examine its discursive framework, which is as potent as its material infrastructure.

In this conference paper, we apply a combination of critical discourse analysis, literary criticism, and critical quantitative methods to conduct a critical examination of a wide array of AI discourses, including company statements, scholarly literature, policy briefs, media narratives, research institute webpages, and online platform content, developing a discursive snapshot of the AI industry. Our analysis of more than 1,200 content items demonstrates that discourse not only shapes the creation of AI artifacts and mythologies but also limits our collective imagination and material possibilities. Extending the recent work of Timnit Gebru and Émile Torres, who show how the neoliberal Californian ideology at the heart of the AI industry is not a disruptive phenomenon of the mid-to-late 20th century but rather a direct continuation of long-standing eugenic ideas (Gebru & Torres, 2023), we trace the entanglements of racism, sexism, and colonialism with the messianic narrative of linear world progress and technology as its driving force back to the First Contact in the Americas. This historical genealogy demonstrates how the current imperialistic entrenchment of AI's ideology and industry, which, in their constant drive for exploitation, expansion, and erasure of difference, functions as an "AI Empire" (Tacheva & Ramasubramanian, 2023). It also highlights the fundamental entanglements of the AI industry with the interlocking systems of sexism, colonialism, racism, capitalism, ableism, and homophobia, indicating

that the “bad apples” approach to industry reform is insufficient for meaningful, equitable sociotechnological change. Instead, collective movements, deeply intertwined in their intersectionality of identities, perspectives, strategies, and embodiments, is required to counter the “lopsided imagination” (Benjamin, 2024) of the AI industry and ideology. These movements are already taking shape among marginalized communities, public technology activists, art collectives, and critical scholars, where abolitionist frameworks are reframing mainstream AI ethics. Rather than focusing on how AI can be improved, they ask a more fundamental question: should the systems of surveillance, exploitation, and segregation that sustain AI exist at all? This growing call for AI abolition demands a radical reimagining of technological futures rooted in liberation, as opposed to reforms that merely polish and perpetuate oppressive systems. To heed this call is to commit to dismantling all structures of domination and building a world where technology advances collective liberation rather than control. Amid escalating ecological and social catastrophes, the time to act is not tomorrow – it is now.

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