

A New AI Lexicon: Responses and Challenges to the Critical AI Discourse

First eight essays published

In January 2021, [we launched 'A New AI Lexicon:'](#) a call for contributions to generate alternate narratives, positionalities, and understandings to the better known and widely circulated ways of talking about AI. From the submissions we received, we selected over 40 essays that center and challenge AI buzzwords. As we publish the final essays, we hope to show how multiple essays by different authors convene under the same keyword but speak to it in vastly different ways; how familiar buzzwords in the discourse can be reinterpreted and re-tooled towards different ends; and how new frames can redirect our attention towards underexplored contexts and geographies.

With [this project](#), our aim is to collectively discuss the limitations of current buzzwords and their interpretation in the critical + ethical AI community. Over the next few months, we will feature authors who redefine existing terms, and propose new ones.

Our inaugural essays include:



[CARE: Care as a Tool, Care as a Weapon](#), by **Hannah Zeavin**.

Hannah reflects on the popularity of care as an AI buzzword and asks: “What counts as care in the age of AI?” As virtual agents, robots, and algorithms are increasingly deployed under the rubric of “care,” what (and who) gets to define the term?

[MAINTENANCE: AI Maintenance as Care, Respect, and Guardianship](#), by **Anna Pendergrast** and **Kelly Pendergrast**. Anna and Kelly reflect on why we need Maintenance in the AI vernacular, and open space to better consider the people affected by, and the people who maintain AI systems.



[AN ELECTRIC BRAIN \(電腦\): Naming, Categorizing, and New Futures in AI](#), by **Yung Au**. Yung looks at how to ensure that the words we have reflect the worlds we wish to see.

[BIG DATA SWINDLING \(大数据杀熟, dà shùjù shā shú\): One understanding of algorithmic discrimination in China](#), by **Shazeda Ahmed**. Shazeda examines a new term in Chinese tech discourse, and asks: how is the large scale deployment of dynamic pricing facilitating a conversation around pre-existing social questions of fairness and discrimination?



[DISSENT: Can an algorithmic system produce dissent?](#), by **Sareeta Amrute**. Sareeta argues that we “need to move from the more circumscribed arena of algorithmic accountability, to the larger question of how algorithmic systems shape our capacity to dissent.”

[DISSENT: AI for Good or Control? A look at the growth in AI investment in MENA](#), by **Islam al Khatib**. Islam outlines how new forms of AI capitalism aim to "not only predict and modify human behavior as a means to produce revenue and market control, but to also police and discipline activists."



[IMBRICATION: Living with Seamful Technologies](#), by **Ranjit Singh**. Ranjit argues that we should "pay attention to the seamfulness of digital systems, the gaps in practice, who they leave out, and how they overlap with our daily lives."

[OPEN: Contextualizing ‘Open Data’ and AI](#), by **Mehtab Khan**. Mehtab explores the meaning of “Open” in the context of AI technologies, and asks: "How is a dataset ‘open’ if the people included in it are closed to meaningful action when harmed?"

