

PTC'26

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The Cult of the Big Slop: A Literature Review of Where AI is Going

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The rise of AI? 2023?

- The year 2023 marked the release of ChatGPT 4, seen as surprising in capabilities
- Of course artificial intelligence has been a research area for decades

- So why did people start talking about AI so much in 2023?
- How has that discussion changed through today?

- As a framing device, we use the recent book *Cultish*, Motell, 2021
- It pre-dates the release of ChatGPT 3
- It discusses the use of language to control discourse

- Not all groups using controlling language are cults
- But just because it claims not to be a cult doesn't mean it in fact is not a cult

- Discourse is a key concept, but here we point to Uncanny Discourse, discourse occupying a strange and uncomfortable place
 - Conner, Gaughen, Kenney, Winter, SIGCHI 2025

A structure for analysis

Cultish language

Using words to
influence discourse

Who can say what?

How can you
respond?

Thought-Terminating
Cliches

Books

Buowalimini: Unmasking AI (2023)

Mollick: Co-Intelligence (2024)

Bender & Hanna: The AI Con (2025)

Academic

HCI design
Cybersecurity

Journalistic

Tech analysis
Features
Paper of record

Trends year by year, book/academic/journalist

- 2023:** Book - Unmasking AI on the cultural problems of AI (identifying flaws)
Academic - Proof of abilities, controlled studies passing tests
Journalist - Shock and awe, seen in hiring/firing of Altman,
Actor and writer strike
- 2024:** Book - Co-intelligence on how to use AI as a peer to humans
Academic - Cybersecurity implications, red-teaming AI, inducing hallucinations
Journalistic - Safety of AI to humanity, corporate competition
power consumption by AI (here at PTC in January 2025)
- 2025:** Book - The AI Con on the marketing of AI and the limitations of AI
Academic - Solving HCI problems using narrow AI, breaking guardrails
Journalist - The bubble, layoffs and rehiring, circular deals

Where does this leave us?

When submitted this summer, we raised questions that perhaps growth was slowing
AI proponents have pointed to exponential growth

But the early part of a logistic curve looks exponential

(described in *More Everything Forever*,
Becker, 2025)

Articles on data centers ruining neighborhoods

Lawsuits on copyright and death

“The Internet is dead”

“Advertising is dead”

Is this sustainable?

Futurism

BAD VIBES

Inventor of Vibe Coding Admits He Hand-Coded His New Project

It's a disaster waiting to happen.

By **Victor Tangermann** / Published **Oct 20, 2025 10:55 AM EDT**



Michael Macor/The San Francisco Chronicle via Getty Images

The cult of the big slop

Consider *Algospeak*, Aleksic, 2025

Influencers change the way they speak so that “the algorithm” upvotes them

But slop, low-quality content created by AI, will do the same

It is now big, very big

Every search starts with an AI summary

But still we see the Thought-Terminating Cliches

“AI will change all of work”

“AI will fix everything”

“AI is inevitable”

“AI will kill us all”

But still the slop



A widely memed still from Star Wars by George Lucas

The ability to speak does not make you intelligent

Future work

A broad area that continues to grow and change

Will the bubble pop?

Can we visualize this wealth of data better?

We believe so – reach out?