

Self consciousness issues

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Self Consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness

The Turing Test is known as a test for machines with artificial intelligence, comparing machine and human answers anonymously. Since, however, humans tend to anthropomorphize everything from rocks to metal, and especially machines [Kat99], the Turing Test can only be effective in distinguishing machine from human to the extent that an answer must necessarily be profoundly and absolutely different (not vulnerable to imitation) for a human than for a machine. This leads me to consider areas of experience that are unique for humans and cannot be programmed into a machine. My three questions target self-consciousness and cosmic consciousness, two levels referred to by psychiatrist Richard Maurice Bucke (1905) as being specific only to humans. They are:

1. What is your earliest memory?
2. Tell me about your most frightening dream.
3. Describe your personal method of communication with God or the Sacred.

The first question is based on the understanding that the level of memory humans rely upon to recall early events in life operates from about the age of three or four years old. Prior to that, the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex are not fully developed [Luk10]. If this question, then, is asked of a human, their earliest memory is unlikely to be a recollection from before age three or four. An artificial intelligence machine, however, has working memory activated immediately upon being turned on. I reason that a machine will answer this question with literally their first experience and not with a later one.

The second question assumes that machines with artificial intelligence do not experience altered states of consciousness, and therefore do not dream.

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I suspect they would not be able to describe a dream that would fool me into thinking they are human. I pay attention to my dreams and the dreams of other people, and I have noticed that describing a dream is done in a different narrative style than describing an ordinary awareness event. Dreams are often fragmentary, have confused chronology, incorporate magically changing imagery, are usually symbolic, may be vague upon recall. Furthermore, AI machines do not experience emotion, so fear would be a foreign experience to them. Even if the machine has been programmed to articulate emotional expression, what a machine would find “frightening” would no doubt be qualitatively distinct from what a human finds frightening.

The third question assumes that an artificial intelligence, although it might have been programmed with religious information, would have no personal religious experience of relationship with God or the Sacred. It would therefore not be in the habit of communicating with the Divine, being incapable of cosmic consciousness. These three questions target areas of experience difficult to imitate and outside the experience of a robot or AI unit.

References

Bucke, R. M. (1905). *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*. Innes & Sons. pp. 1-2

Kat99: , (Bumby & Dautenhahn, 1999),

Luk10: , (Mastin, 2010),