Will we ever know if our computers gain consciousness?

The question of whether machines can have consciousness is not new, with proponents of strong artificial intelligence (strong AI) and weak AI having exchanged philosophical arguments for a considerable period of time.

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When thinking about artificial consciousness, we face several problems (Manzotti and Chella, 2018). Most fundamentally, there is the difficulty to explain consciousness, to explain how subjectivity can emerge from matter—often called the “hard problem of consciousness” (Chalmers, 1996). In addition, our understanding of human consciousness is shaped by our own phenomenal experience. Whereas, we know about human consciousness from the first-person perspective, artificial consciousness will only be accessible to us from the third-person perspective. Related to this is the question of how to know whether a machine has consciousness.

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Overall, researchers broadly agree that current machines and robots are not conscious—in spite of a huge amount of science fiction depictions that seem to suggest otherwise. In a survey with 184 students, however, the answers to the question “Do you believe that contemporary electronic computers are conscious?” were: No: 82%; Uncertain: 15%; Yes: 3% (Reggia et al., 2015). Remarkably, the question in the survey was about “contemporary electronic computers,” and not about AI or robots.

Read full, original post: Artificial Intelligence: Does Consciousness Matter?