

Love Beyond Algorithm. Why Will AI Never Be Conscious?

Constantin Ghioanță

*Baptist Theological Institute, Bucharest, Romania
costelghioanca@yahoo.com*

Abstract: The subject of AI consciousness is becoming increasingly relevant as rapid technological developments unfold. This paper argues that artificial intelligence will never attain what can be defined as genuine consciousness. The study begins by defining the nature of real consciousness, which is described as profoundly experiential and relational. Several main arguments against the idea of AI consciousness are examined, with special reference to John Searle's Chinese Room thought experiment, the implications of Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems as interpreted by Roger Penrose, and the problem of qualia articulated by Thomas Nagel. The final part of the paper maintains that consciousness goes beyond the cognitive level and is a constitutive part of ontological relationships. Building on Martin Buber's *I-Thou* framework and reflections from theological anthropology, it argues that love is an ontological dimension of personal being. According to Christian theology, this love is perfectly exemplified in Jesus Christ. Because artificial intelligence is confined to computational programming, the kind of subjectivity required for genuine relational selfhood cannot arrive. Therefore, AI can mostly remain a simulation rather than a conscious entity.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Consciousness, Philosophy of Mind, Chinese Room Argument, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, Qualia, Relational Ontology, Martin Buber, Christian Anthropology, Love

Introduction

The film industry, as an important cultural marker, is showing that people are very interested in scenarios involving synthetic consciousness that resemble human qualities. Characters such as HAL 9000 in "2001: A Space Odyssey," Ava in "Ex Machina," or Dr. Will Caster in "Transcendence" make us ponder if AI will ever become conscious. As the title of this paper is unambiguous, this study argues that the answer is negative. The AI will never be conscious! To support this claim, the study defines consciousness, surveys some of the main arguments against the idea of AI consciousness, and then reflects on the notion of "love" theologically and philosophically. The aim is to prove that love goes beyond the algorithm and is integral to the reality of consciousness in a way that artificial intelligence will never be able to duplicate.

What is consciousness?

While consciousness is something humans experience rather than can define, it may be described as "the perception of what passes in a man's own mind [...] Consciousness is a province of metaphysics" (*Biblical Cyclopedica*, n.d.). This definition places consciousness in a spiritual realm, though not separated from the body, in contrast to a purely functionalist or physicalist perspective. Adding some details, we note that "consciousness is the difference between normal wakefulness and the oblivion of deep general anesthesia. It is the

experiential aspect of brain function and especially of perception: the colors, shapes, tastes, emotions, thoughts, and more, that give our lives texture and meaning” (Seth, 2026).

This idea of an “experiential aspect of the brain” emphasizes the human dimension of consciousness. Hence, we can define consciousness as *a form of self-awareness, experiential and reflective, simultaneously encompassing the notions of selfhood and relational alterity*. This definition suggests that consciousness involves both human reason and experience, as well as the perception of human uniqueness and unrepeatability, always in the context of relational diversity (alterity).

A short review of arguments against AI consciousness

The discussion of AI consciousness is complex, and there are many arguments and variants supporting the claim that consciousness and AI are incompatible. Some of these arguments will be briefly surveyed below.

The Chinese room experiment

Philosopher John Searle proposes a *Gedankenexperiment*, widely known as the Chinese room experiment. The author invites us to imagine him being locked in a room and given a batch of Chinese writing. He has absolutely no knowledge of written or spoken Chinese. Then he receives a second batch of Chinese script, this time with a set of rules, written in English, to correlate the second batch with the first batch. So, he can now identify the Chinese formal symbols by their shape. Furthermore, he receives a third batch of Chinese symbols and can correlate them with the first two batches. This time, there are instructions for giving back certain Chinese symbols from the first two batches in response to symbols from the third batch. Without knowing it, those who provide him with the Chinese symbols call the first batch “a script”, the second batch “a story”, and the third batch “questions”. They call the symbols received from the one locked in the room, “answers”, and the rules given in English, “the program”. By practicing, the person in the room gets so good at working with symbols that someone outside the room cannot even figure out that the one locked inside does not speak Chinese at all.

He is repeating the experiment, this time with everything written in English, a language the author knows very well. As the answers are good, both in English and Chinese, those outside the room can’t distinguish the following difference: the author *understands* English, while he is *manipulating* uninterpreted formal symbols, performing “computational operations on specified elements” (Searle, 1980, p. 418). So the conclusion is that strong AI is not “understanding” the stories and the program in the same way a human mind can. Computational operations are not what we call “understanding”. Our perspective is that understanding is a constitutive part of human consciousness, and AI will never become conscious.

Kurt Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems

In 1931, Kurt Gödel (1992), a brilliant mathematician, logician, and philosopher, developed his incompleteness theorems proving that for any consistent logical system, there are true statements that cannot be proven in that system and that a consistent formal system cannot prove its own consistency. Sir Roger Penrose explains further, connecting Gödel’s theorems with artificial intelligence:

Among the things that Gödel indisputably established was that no *formal system* of sound mathematical rules of proof can ever suffice, even in principle, to establish all the true propositions of ordinary arithmetic. This is certainly remarkable enough. But a powerful case can also be made that his results showed something

more than this, and established that human understanding and insight cannot be reduced to any set of computational rules. For what he appears to have shown is that no such system of rules can ever be sufficient to prove even those propositions of arithmetic whose truth is accessible, in principle, to human intuition and insight, whence human intuition and insight cannot be reduced to any set of rules. It will be part of my purpose here to try to convince the reader that Gödel's theorem indeed shows this, and provides the foundation of my argument that there must be more to human thinking than can ever be achieved by a computer, in the sense that we understand the term 'computer' today (Penrose, 1994, pp. 64-65).

The human mind operates beyond the limits of computational systems, meaning that some truths exist and can be grasped by humans through intuition and other means, but never by AI as a formal, consistent computational machine.

Other arguments

Other arguments support the idea that consciousness is spiritual or metaphysical and, consequently, not attainable by AI. For instance, Adrian Owen's research demonstrates that some patients in a vegetative state are conscious and can communicate with others using magnetic resonance imaging (Owen et al. 2006). John Searle mentions other arguments in support of a subjective nature of human consciousness: *Absent Qualia* – he refers to the fact that humans experience things in different ways because “each conscious state is a quale.” Or, in other words, each state has a “certain qualitative feel”; *Spectrum Inversion* – it is not possible to know how other people experience the same things, such as colors. While external behavior may be similar, people's inner experiences differ. This means that functionalism cannot explain these inner experiences; Thomas Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* – this argument suggests that “for any conscious being, there is a what-it-is-like aspect to his existence. And this is left out of any objective account of consciousness because an objective account cannot explain the subjective character of consciousness” (Searle, 2004, pp. 84-86).

The arguments mentioned above affirm that there are some specific aspects of human consciousness that are not transferable to AI. As much as it will develop quantitatively, there is a qualitative gap between human consciousness and AI that cannot be overcome. The following section explores a human characteristic, namely love.

Love beyond the algorithm

One of the main characteristics of human consciousness is the perception of relationships (participation in relational ontology) and the expression of love. According to Christian anthropology, these traits are ingrained in humans by means of creation. As Taliaferro mentions, “virtually all dimensions of Christian theology are impacted by matters of mind and consciousness; moral theology, soteriology, Christology, mystical theology, and eschatology are just the beginning of a long list of domains that bear on mind and consciousness” (Taliaferro, 2024, p. 4). When the Bible speaks about the mind, it does not refer to the brain but to the inner man, to his subjectivity or to what we call his *consciousness*. Mind, like any other human capacity, refers to “our whole being” to “every aspect of our life” (Arnold, 2010, p. 877). Because God's will for people is to use their minds to love Him and their neighbors, love, as a faculty of consciousness, finds its expression in relationships.

Martin Buber, a philosopher, argues that human relationships are unique and they are not quantified objectively or in functionalistic terms: “Thus human being is not *He* or *She*, bounded from every other *He* and *She*, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; [...] But with no neighbor, and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens

(Buber, 1958, p. 8). Buber draws a distinction between two primary words: the combination *I-Thou* and the combination *I-It*. These primary words “do not signify things, but they intimate relations”, nor do they describe something that exist independently of them but being spoken they bring about existence.” (Buber, 1958, p. 3). His conclusion is that “there is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*” (Buber, 1958, p. 4).

This relational conceptualization of selfhood is best exemplified in acts of love. By definition, real love (see 1 Corinthians 13) incorporates another person (*Thou*) in oneself. This “incorporation” can go so far that *I* cease to exist. Such a love is exemplified supremely by Jesus Christ: “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He would depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (New American Standard Bible [NASB], 1995, John 13:1). “The end” mentioned here is the cross, the “shut down” of the *I* for the sake of others.

Moreover, this sacrificial manifestation of love is *voluntary*: “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it back. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back. This commandment I received from My Father.” (John 10:17-18, NASB). Consequently, this love is not algorithmic and is not conditioned by certain data of human behavior. It is the natural expression of the *I* from the primary word *I-Thou*, and this *I* is ontologically constituted as *I-Thou*. Therefore, love, as divine essence (1 John 4:8), is a relational ontology.

Christos Yannaras writes that “love” from the proposition *God is love* “defines the *is*, the reality of being, before any manifestation of activity or determination of behavior” (Yannaras, 2001, p. 11). Being transformed by *metanoia*, Christians are called to the same love that has become part of their new nature. They emulate the same Christlike, non-algorithmic love: “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? And if you greet only your brothers *and sisters*, what more are you doing *than others*? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same? Therefore, you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:46-48, NASB). These verses are connecting love with *being* (both an essence and a verb) in a way that explicitly disapproves any type of “algorithmic love”.

What about AI? Supposing we reach the ASI (Artificial Superintelligence), and it is a conscious entity, what would the AI manifest like? James Barrat, a writer and journalist, gives an answer:

AI theorists propose it is possible to determine what an AI’s fundamental *drives* will be. That’s because once it is self-aware, it will go to great lengths to fulfill whatever goals it’s programmed to fulfill, and to avoid failure. Our ASI will want access to energy in whatever form is most useful to it, whether actual kilowatts of energy or cash or something else it can exchange for resources. It will want to improve itself because that will increase the likelihood that it will fulfill its goals. Most of all, it will not want to be turned off or destroyed, which would make goal fulfillment impossible (Barrat, 2015, p. 19).

These insights prove that AI is not capable of real love, and, implicitly, it will never attain consciousness. On the contrary, this “functional egocentrism” would be a demonstration of the algorithmic and deterministic activity of AI, which is incompatible with a conscious ontological love. Even if AI is programmed to love, the result would be a poor simulation, because AI will never be able to speak the primary word *I-Thou*. Moreover, it will never understand that real love can shut down the *I* for the sake of others. AI will never be conscious.

Concluding remarks

Despite efforts to invest AI with anthropomorphic features, the prospect of seeing conscious AI is utopic. An AI simulation of consciousness could, at one point, be indistinguishable from real consciousness. However, it will remain a simulacrum rather than an identity. The Chinese Room experiment, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems, the absence of *qualia*, and other arguments support our thesis that AI will never be conscious.

Beyond these philosophical arguments, Christian love is inseparable from mind and consciousness because it belongs to a relational ontology. Building on Martin Buber's *I–Thou* philosophical insights and on theological anthropology (humans as *imago Dei*), it can be concluded that love is an ontological mode of being. According to Christian theology, this love is perfectly exemplified in Jesus Christ (Rotaru, 2010, p. 7) because, unlike AI, it is ontological, not algorithmic; sacrificial, not suppressive; voluntary, not programmed. Consciousness and love are beyond the algorithm.

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