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## CAN MACHINES BE CONSCIOUS?

With the exponential development of the capacities of machines to compute, to mimic (at least) enormous intelligence, and now even “learn,” the question has now become pressing: Can machines actually be “conscious?” By this I mean, can they be aware of things? Can they experience things? Some machines can now behave in ways that intelligent things behave, and can “learn” in ways that far outstrip our capacities to learn. But are they also conscious/aware? Do they “feel” anything?

This matters very much. If such machines are conscious in this sense, we would have obligations regarding how we treat them. They would have “rights.” We could not ethically treat them just however we’d like.

I will argue, however, that machines cannot be conscious. We can relax about this at least: We don’t have to worry about their feelings. We have no obligations to them. They have no rights.

I will argue using insights from contemporary philosophy of mind. I will use the work of David Chalmers, in particular, to argue that 1) consciousness is not a physical phenomenon, though 2) there are law-like correlations between conscious states and physical (brain) states. These physical states and events causes conscious states. But I will argue against Chalmers, and in favour of John Searle’s view, that 3) the physical states that cause conscious states are only biological states. Therefore, since machines do not have biological brains, they cannot be conscious.