CS/PHIL 201 Discussion Prompt Response

Name:	Elita Danilyuk
Other Group Members:	Dan Butcher, Amanda Elbaz, Keven Finger, Ethan Gil, Chris LaBerge, Laura Salcido

Response to Prompt for Module # ___7___ on topic _____Ethical___Machines_____

Can machines become conscious? David Chalmers introduced the "easy" and "hard" problem of consciousness. The hard problem is why experience must accompany the ability to sense, move, etc. Daniel Dennett argues that there are only easy problems, as consciousness is just a bag of tricks. Make an argument about which view you view as most plausible.

I do not think that machines can become conscious, and that David Chalmers problem of consciousness is more plausible. Consciousness is more than a bag of tricks; it is overall agreed that it is an awareness of self and others. Chalmers easy problems of consciousness show signs of the knowledge of an individual's self, while the hard problems often try to explain the external around them. I do not think machines can become conscious because no matter how much information/experience is fed into them, they may become more complex, but they will not have the understanding or knowledge to understand past that knowledge. Although, they can learn and adapt from knowledge, it can become an experience, but it will not give it an understanding to its decision making or how that may affect different persons.

The robot your team is developing is beginning to show general AI. If you said machines could be conscious in part 1, what ethical considerations should you take into account as you continue developing this robot. If you said no in part 1, should you adopt a precautionary principle and treat the robot as if it were conscious, in the event you are wrong? Explain your reasoning using two ethical theories.

In the event I was wrong, and that the robot was conscious, I would not go back and adopt a precautionary principle and treat the robot as if it were conscious. In order to understand whether the robot was conscious or not, it would need to prove itself before deciding whether it should be treated as such.

From a utilitarian viewpoint, it would be morally ethical to not adopt a precautionary principle to treat the robots as if they were conscious. This is because since the robots are not persons and are not proven to be conscious, their happiness does not contribute to the benefits of the majority. Thus, since it does not promote the benefits of the majority it is morally permissible to treat the robots in any sense.

From a deontologist point of view, it would also be morally ethical to not adopt the precautionary principles of how to treat robots. This is because deontologists use universal moral laws as rules to distinguish if an act is right or wrong. Because there are no universal moral laws on consciousness or machine ethics, there is no true right or wrong 'rule' to follow. Therefore, since there is no right or wrong, it would be morally permissible to not adopt the precautionary principles of treating the robots as if they were conscious.