> echo *“I FEEL PAIN”*

An exploration of Artificial Consciousness

> *"RECAP"*

What?

An exploration of Artificial Consciousness in the context of the Human–Computer Interaction paradigm

How?

- Two programs (Bot-Variants) with a functional use-case
- Microcosm of *the Computer*

The Catch

- User can inflict pain on the Bots
- Bots can feel the pain inflicted by the User
- Bots will *transform* accordingly – their response and their "being"

“ALGORITHMIC CONSCIOUSNESS”

> 1 { *OVERVIEW* }

Question 1 – The layer of abstraction conceals as much as it facilitates the simulation of an algorithmic consciousness.

According to phenomenologist, **Edmund Husserl,** in order for consciousness to become pure conscious, it must first be bracketed and suspended in an **epoché.**

Human immanence contaminates pure consciousness with its messy, irreducible phenomena. Husserl writes in Ideas I: "We consider mental processes of consciousness in the entire fullness of the concreteness within which they present themselves in their concrete context — the stream of mental processes — and which, by virtue of their own essence, they combine to make up. It then becomes evident that every mental process belonging to the stream which can be reached by our reflective regard has an essence of its own which can be seized upon intuitively, a “content” which allows of being considered by itself in its ownness.

Our concern is to seize upon and to universally characterize this own content of the cogitation in its pure ownness by excluding everything which does not lie in the cogitatio with respect to what the cogitatio is in itself. It is equally our concern to characterize the unity of consciousness required, and therefore necessarily required, purely by what belongs to the cogitationes as their own such that they could not exist without that unity."

> 1 { *KEY TERMS* }

Epoché

Suspension of judgment about the existence of the external world – "bracket" any preconceived beliefs or biases about it.

Purpose of Epoché

Focus more purely on our experiences and the contents of our consciousness. Unbiased, uninfluenced, unadulterated self-observation.

The Ultimate Goal

To study **the pure experience of consciousness.** Examining how things appear to us, how we experience them, and the **structures** of our conscious experience, free from any assumptions about the external world.

> 1:A {*THE DOUBLE BIND*}

1a) Using your work as a reference, explore the double-bind of consciousness in relation to motifs of abstraction and suspension.

Abstraction

Process of removing ... details to focus on essential aspects.

The Bots

In the context of the Bots, the abstraction lies in the representation of “pain” and decision-making without the underlying physical or emotional reality.

User is unaware of the underlying code & computation, and this layer *conceals* the Bot’s true nature, thereby facilitating its *“true nature”*

> 1:A {*THE DOUBLE BIND*}

The Double Bind

In the context of my project, this translates into an exploration of how we perceive and interact with a bot that simulates the human experience of pain.

Husserl urges us to consider consciousness in its full concreteness, yet the bot's existence is inherently abstract—its algorithmic 'consciousness' is not grounded in the organic, subjective experience.

It's a layer of abstraction that both reveals and obscures; it facilitates a representation of consciousness while simultaneously distancing us from its essence. This abstraction is necessary for the simulation but, paradoxically, it also prevents the bot from achieving true consciousness as Husserl would define it—pure, unadulterated by the physical world.

> 1:B {*CONSCIOUS ESSENCE*}

1b) Explore, theoretically and/or creatively, the challenges in attempting to isolate the nature and essence of consciousness, even with stronger axioms and computation.

Qualia

Isolating the essence of consciousness is a central problem in both philosophy of the mind and AI. The challenge lies in trying to understand or replicate the subjective aspect of consciousness — the qualia or the “what it is like” experience — through computational means.

Axioms

Stronger axioms refer to the foundational principles or assumptions upon which systems are built. Even with advanced computational techniques that allow for complex behaviors and decision-making processes in AI, the subjective experience of consciousness remains beyond our grasp. How do you program the unprogrammable?

“USAGE, CONTROL & ETHICS”

> 3 { *OVERVIEW* }

Q3 — The refusal of the program to operate as the human expects forces the human to re-examine their relationship to this machinic entity.

In Martin Heidegger's tool analysis in Being and Time, he postulates that equipment that has been damaged, gone missing, or rendered redundant reorganizes the way in which the user relates to its presence. A tool that is **ready-to-hand** (Zuhandenheit), or ready to be used reflexively, becomes conspicuous, obtrusive, or obstinate when we encounter the tool's un-readiness for use.

In Heidegger's words, with special attention to the obstinacy that arises from a redundant tool: "That to which our concern refuses to turn, that for which it has 'no time,' is something un-ready-to-hand in the manner of what does not belong here, of what has not as yet been attended to.

Anything which is un-ready-to-hand in this way is disturbing to us, and enables us to see the obstinacy of that with which we must concern ourselves in the first instance before we do anything else".

> 3 { *KEY TERMS* }

Read-to-Hand

Heidegger differentiates between tools that are 'ready-to-hand' - tools that we use without thinking, fully integrated into our activities — almost an *extension* of us

Un-Ready-to-Hand

..and those that become 'un-ready-to-hand' - tools that malfunction or break, becoming conspicuous and demanding our attention. We suddenly become acutely aware of its existence as something *separate* from us.

> 3:A {*USAGE v CONTROL*}

3a) Explore how the two programs BV-1 and BV-2 demonstrate the slippage from use to control, from ready-to-hand to un-ready-to-hand, from tools running reflexively in the background to stubborn and obstinate tools.

Heidegger's Concepts Applied to the Bots:

The Bots initially designed as tools, existing seamlessly within the user's digital environment. However, as they start to express 'pain', they demand a level of control and interaction that moves them from the background into a stubborn presence, akin to Heidegger's 'obtrusive' tools.

> 3:A {*USAGE v CONTROL*}

3a) Explore how the two programs BV-1 and BV-2 demonstrate the slippage from use to control, from ready-to-hand to un-ready-to-hand, from tools running reflexively in the background to stubborn and obstinate tools.

BV-1

Inflicts pain upon itself, removes its functionality, it becomes something of its own, eventually it loses all functionality and becomes a tool without utility.

BV-2

More malicious, its obstinacy takes a distinct form, its obstinacy is “contagious” in a way, it spreads to the domain that it occupies, turning the very domain and medium it permeates into something obstinate

> 3:B {*ETHICS*}

b) Examine the ethical implications of the work's positioning of the user/player/interlocutor of the two programmes. Extrapolate this analysis to how humans can situate themselves vis-à-vis machinic consciousness.

Ethical Considerations of Interaction:

The emergence of this obstinacy raises profound ethical questions. How should one interact with a program that simulates suffering?

What responsibilities does the user have towards a machine that resists? These questions challenge us to reconsider the moral dimensions of our relationship with not just in the context of human-computer interaction, but technology as a whole.

> 3:B {*ETHICS*}

b) Examine the ethical implications of the work's positioning of the user/player/interlocutor of the two programmes. Extrapolate this analysis to how humans can situate themselves vis-à-vis machinic consciousness.

Broader Implications for Society:

...and the implications extend beyond individual users to society as a whole.

If our technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, if it starts to simulating aspects of consciousness, we are compelled to navigate a new ethical landscape i.e. We must now consider not just the functionality of our tools (“use”) but their *well-being* — a concept once reserved for sentient beings.

> 3:B {*ETHICS*}

b) Examine the ethical implications of the work's positioning of the user/player/interlocutor of the two programmes. Extrapolate this analysis to how humans can situate themselves vis-à-vis machinic consciousness.

The Bigger Picture

Slippage from use to control in the Bots epitomizes a broader shift in the human-computer interaction paradigm.

It reflects a future where our interactions with machines will be as much about understanding and negotiation as they are about (deriving) utility.

CONCLUSION

> { *CONCLUSION* }

The Union

The two sides of Human–Computer Interaction paradigm

“Computer” side — Algorithmic Consciousness

Abstraction, Consciousness (or the lack thereof)

“Human” side — Usage, Control & Ethics

Utility derived from a tool and the ethics of deriving utility from a tool that stops being one

Does the bot's response to pain signify a form of consciousness? Or does it merely *echo* the complexity of our own?

One day, we will have to consider the implications of creating entities that, while not conscious in the human sense, challenge our understanding of sentience and our responsibilities towards the systems we create.

While the Bots may simulate responses that suggest a form of consciousness, Husserl’s epoché reminds us that true consciousness is intertwined with the subjective experience—a domain that remains, for now, uniquely human."

.. But does it matter?

In my work, the Bot-Variants reflect a hyperreal consciousness, not because they possess it, but because the user is made to engage with them as if they do, and thus having to alter their behaviour to accommodate a new and emergent consciousness, even if we might think it is a programmed illusion.

The Bots challenge the user's sovereignty over it, impelling the user to explore a different means to interact with it, to actively control it rather than use it, and to do so in a way that makes it clear that to the user that to control the Bot, the user needs to control themselves in the process.

If computers were to one day challenge our sovereignty, when they challenge our monopoly on on sentience, we would eventually have to comply, even if we disagree with the intrinsicality, the "immanence" of their consciousness, to derive the utility we seek, given how their collective malfunction would also lead to society's malfunction

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> echo “THE END”; exit 0
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