

Meme machines and consciousness

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Abstract

What would it take for an artificial system to have something like human consciousness? Central to human consciousness is *subjectivity* and the notion of an experiencing self. It is argued that the self is more like a story or myth than a persisting entity that *has* free will and consciousness. Memes are information passed from one person to another by imitation, and the theory is proposed that the idea of a persisting self is a memeplex; a group of memes that propagate together. This selfplex is the origin of ordinary human consciousness. Therefore, only systems capable of imitation (and hence of sustaining memetic evolution) can have this kind of consciousness. Two kinds of artificial system are imagined, one that can imitate humans and one that can imitate other systems similar to itself. The first would come to have human-like consciousness. The second might be conscious in a completely novel way.

Key Words

Consciousness, Artificial consciousness, Meme, Self, Free will, Imitation,