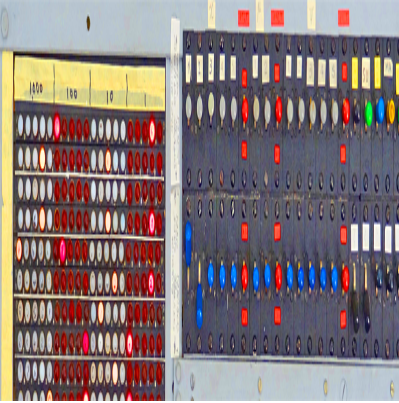




## AI revisited

### Description

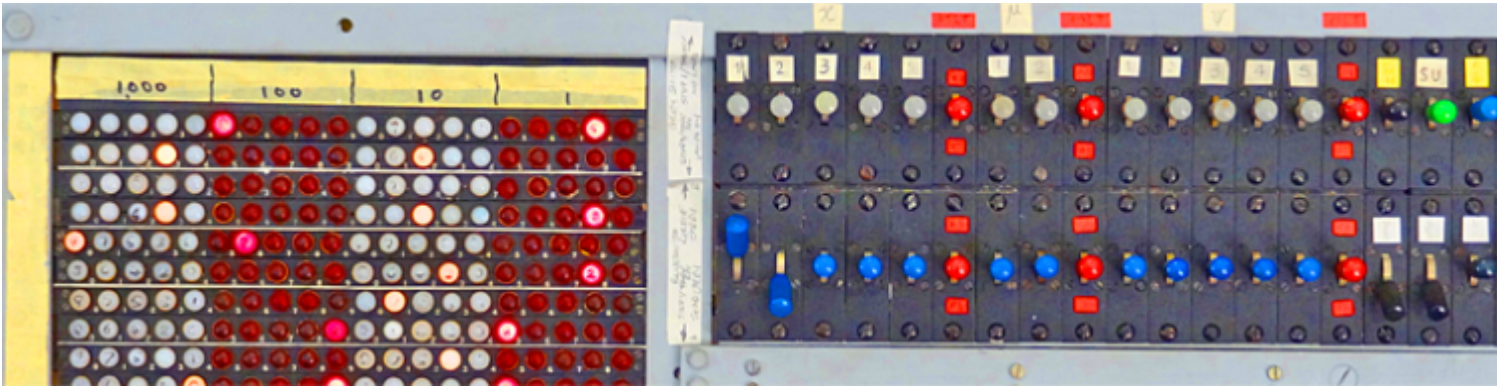
John Lee and I sat down to talk about AI (artificial intelligence). Both of us were involved in the field in so far as it related to computer-aided design. That experience dates back to the 1980s.

In our conversation we touched on how the AI focus has changed since the 1980s. We started by identifying recent high profile examples: face recognition (as deployed in smartphones), automated language translation, driverless cars, clever game playing programmes (e.g. for chess and Go), AI characters in games, and “big data” processing.

### Anti-AI

We looked at the old categories of *symbolic* versus *connectionist* AI, as well as *hard* versus *soft* AI, and then proceeded to address objections to the whole AI project.

- We felt that AI inherits the objections commonly directed at automation in general. This includes the moral and political challenges associated with a deskilled labour force, the control of labour, the supposed dehumanising aspects of industrial production lines as we all become “cogs” in the big “capitalist machine” (Marx).
- This brought us to the supposed dangers of AI, as people think of autonomous independent machines able to take control and rule our lives, in indirect ways, but also as our masters in dystopian scifi.
- A further objection to AI comes from philosophical positions such as phenomenology that assert the embodied nature of human intelligence. Machines don’t have bodies, so how can they demonstrate human abilities? John countered this objection by observing that computer software can circumvent the body problem. After all, the human ability to count was no doubt enabled by having fingers, but we have programmed computers to count without giving them fingers.
- We then discussed technical challenges that have made AI difficult, focussing on the combinatorial problem (there are just too many options for a computer to consider in real time for many intellectual problems) and the difficulty of dealing with constraints and conflicting and fluid value systems, particularly if one wants computers to design, or be smart design assistants. John furnished some AI-friendly responses to these objections.



## Scifi AI

The role of AI in philosophical and quasi-philosophical thought experiments entered the conversation, e.g. the mind-body problem, agency, will, materialism, and consciousness (implied and not discussed).

Finally, we considered sci-fi novels and films and the way they portray AI. We seemed to agree that machine intelligences feature amongst an array of protagonists that includes villains, monsters, hybrid creatures, and aliens of various kinds.

This is a long audio recording (1 hour and 25 minute). If you listen to this as a podcast then you can stop at any time and resume later â?? or stop listening altogether! See [podcast instructions](#).

Also see [posts tagged AI](#).

[https://richardcoyne.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/aidiscussion\\_a.m4a](https://richardcoyne.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/aidiscussion_a.m4a)

## Note

- Image above is of a control panel on one of the code breaking computers at Bletchley Park.

## Category

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Podcast

## Tags

1. AI
2. ciphercity

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