

Marita Isaksson

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The implications of current technological developments for Harry Collins epistemological theory and his critique of the possibilities of a general AI.

Social constructivism and Harry Collins epistemological theory puts focus on the sociology of scientific knowledge, scientific practice and the nature of expertise. From his theory, inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' and David Bloor's strong programme, Collins has since the nineties argued against the possibilities of creating a general artificial intelligence, which can be compared with any cognitive functions that a human accommodates. His epistemological theory withholds aspects of knowledge basics, transfer and communication that are said to be unique and/or can only be performed by humans. Two AI-research areas that in recent years have reported progress are autonomous vehicles and games. The first are supposed to be able to handle a multitude of environments, interpret conflicting signals and 'make' ethical decisions. The later are said to be able to create their own set of rules and perform a basic communication. If these advancements are correct, they challenge Collins critique of a potential general AI by exhibiting social sensibility, being able to adapt to different social and cultural settings, improvising and developing a language in order to communicate. In my paper I empirically test Collins' theories and if his epistemological theory is affected by the reported and anticipated progress in the AI-research. My findings are that Collins' epistemological theory is severely affected due to him slipping towards naturalism in order to construct a solid demarcation line, safeguarding against moving goalposts and resisting to acknowledge the possibility of an AI being able to absorb anything equivalent to human social experience.