A Logician's Apology[1]

AI will not be sentient!

The argument favoring artificial sentient intelligence in machines is that consciousness– our 1st person awareness, experience and understanding– *like everything else*, is strictly physical and computational. Based on this wide-spread assumption, many leading computer science researchers believe it is likely or inevitable that we will build conscious machines in the future (artificial sentient intelligence or ASI). Philosophy-savvy lawyer Andrew Hartford directly challenges this claim with a new logical argument, offering an explicit counter-example.

Hartford proposes an EP (Eternal Past) or Eternal Conjecture[2] such that, "IF there ever is Something there *always* was Something, because no something (existence) comes from absolute Nothing (no existence)". In 99 interrelated papers, the EP Conjecture argues "always" is a foundational concept hiding in plain sight and the key insight to answering Leibniz's question, "Why is There Something (existence) rather than Absolute Nothing (no existence)?". "Always" is recognized as a 1st constraint or condition which must be satisfied by at least 1 base case if there ever is existence (Something). The always existor is something that has a 1st instance which is un-caused, un-beginning, and ontologically prior to time or computation, existing at and as the global origin. This is not the same as finite or infinite "past time", nor is it "time = 0" of a mathematical model (#11.11). The same existor which is un-beginning and before all time (always) is invariant (un-changing) and thus also un-ending and beyond all time (forever): connecting 1st and last. Crucially, Eternal (always & forever) and time are different concepts. Always is not equivalent to past time and forever is not equivalent to future time: past time and future time are our concepts from the middle. Eternal is more fundamental.

As the global origin, the always existor is the singular Source of all existence and possibilities: the Domain, which includes us. But remarkably, always is not encoded with an explicit identity. Because it is without space, always is not a computer of any kind (#68). Because it is before all time, always is not an algorithm or computation of any kind. Hartford argues that because always is the Source of all existence, possibilities, and actualities– including the 1st person mindedness we possess (Consciousness)-- it must be Minded, otherwise we couldn't be (#5.1978). That's because the always Source is 1st and last in the same 1 instance[3], and we exist in the Source's Domain (#64). There cannot be a minded Domain with a mindless Source because we cannot separate the Domain from the Source (#12.5). Something cannot be less than it is (#1.2025). Therefore, the Source is Minded– and yet – it is not a physical object (not in space) or a mathematical object (not formally definable). The always existor is therefore a counter-example to the assumptions underlying artificial sentient intelligence: *a necessary Something that is Minded, but not a computer of any kind.*

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[1] Author: Andrew Downing Hartford. This work relates to the EP Conjecture. Written: December 18, 2025. This paper is awkwardly written in the 3rd person because it is supposed to be the supplement to a citation, which got published 6/1/2026: https://loc.closertotruth.com/theory/hartford-s-minded-eternal-conjecture

[2] This summary paper provides links to the papers of the EC that relate to AI consciousness.

[3] This is a solution to the incredibly hard problem of personal identity: if every atom in your body changes & we think of one moment as different than the next, how does one ("I", "me") maintain personality identity across spacetime/time/instances? Well, an eternal invariant which is 1st & last– and the source of 1st-personness– solves that!

From this perspective, Hartford reasonably asks, “given the Source of consciousness is not a computer or computational, why should we expect computers to be conscious?” While “it remains to be seen whether artificial consciousness is in the domain of all possibilities, we should not presume that we will necessarily build computational consciousness.”

Hartford argues our observed growth of complexity and emergence through evolution is not untrue, but it has “scope” and “context”. Scope because evolution does not explain Nature’s Base Case or Source: the always existor is un-caused and un-beginning; it did not evolve or emerge from any-thing. The standard emergence arguments are defeated by the ep or eternal conjecture because No-thing “emerges” from the perspective of something 1st & last. Likewise, there is context to our scientific descriptions because they are taking place in the middle: within an Eternal 1st and last.