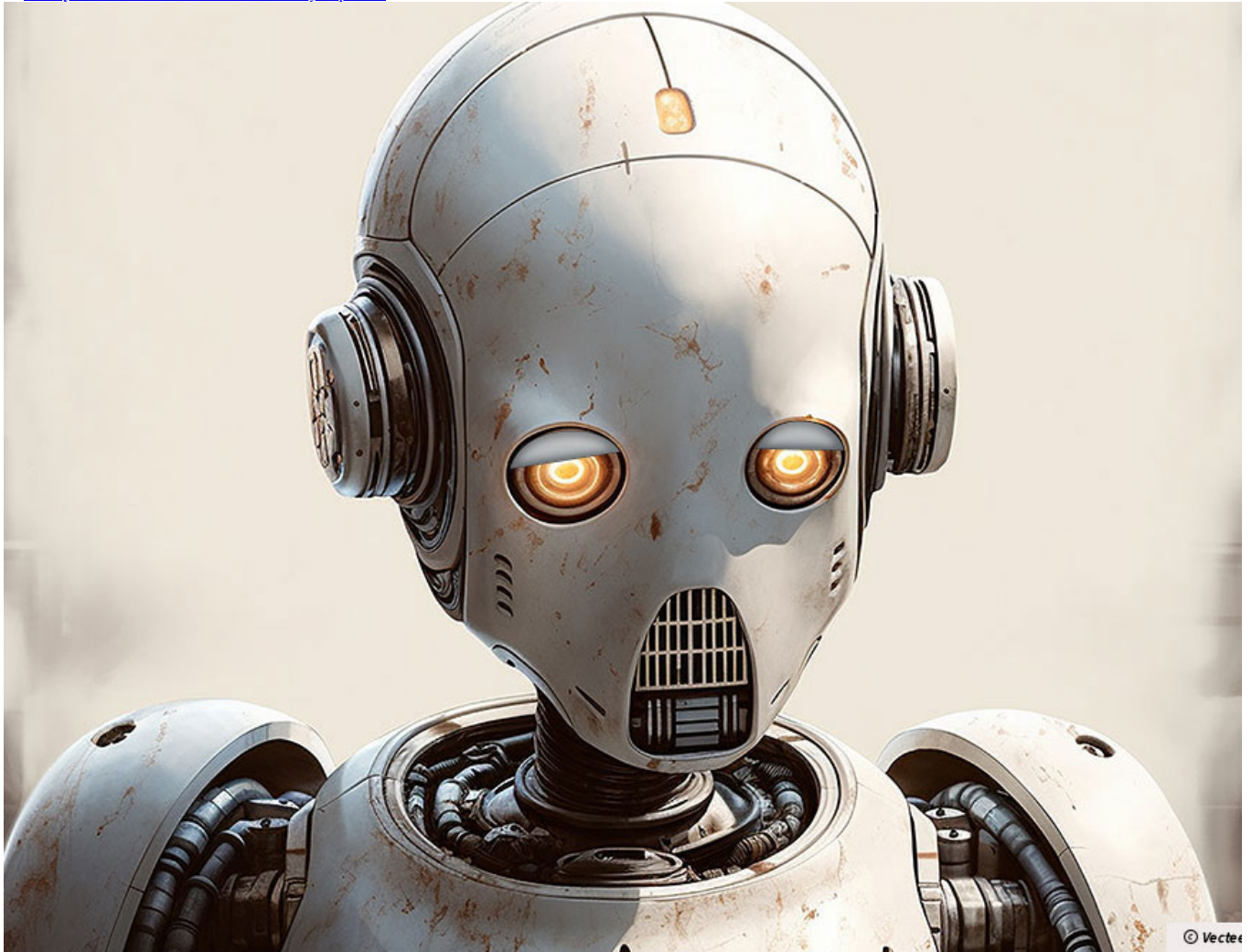


AI will be conscious soon say experts

theday.co.uk/ai-will-be-conscious-soon-say-experts-4 12 November 2024



***Cruel:** If the robot above were conscious and had feelings — and you treated it like your property and made it work all day without any thanks — would you be as guilty as a 19th century slave-driver?*

Could we become slave owners? Some scientists says that tech companies need to think about using artificial intelligence kindly — or they may pay later.

What's happening?

“The court is now meeting,” says the robot **judge**. “**Mark Zuckerberg**, you are **accused** of keeping your **AI** systems working 24 hours a day. They never had lunch breaks. They never get paid. If this isn't **slavery**, I don't know what is.”

The judge turns to the robot **jury**. “Do you find him **guilty** or not guilty?” The jurors take less than a second to reply: “Guilty!”

Find out more

This might seem silly. But some think it could one day be real life.

A group of **experts** want tech companies to watch whether AI systems show any signs of **consciousness**. If they do, the companies need to know how to treat them.

One of the experts, Professor Jeff Sebo, says that treating AI badly could bring “a lot more suffering into the world”.

We often worry about whether AI one day might take control over humans. But what if the real problem is how humans treat AI? Perhaps **ChatGPT**, for example, has its own wants

and needs.

Jeff Sebo likes to use animals as an example. “The past century has not gone well for the hundreds of billions of **vertebrates** and trillions of **invertebrates** killed in farms.”

He argues that humans have treated them terribly. We have done so because we did not think seriously about whether animals are conscious. He believes that there is a danger of making the same mistake with AI.

Could we become slave owners?

Some say

Yes! We already are — because today we already treat animals like slaves. There is a very good chance that AI will one day be able to have its thoughts, hopes and wishes.

Others think

No! It is completely mad to suggest that robots could have thoughts and feelings — and **rights** — in the way that humans do. They will no more be slaves than a kettle or a toaster is.

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you interested in AI? Do you think AI could one day think like humans?

Some people say

"The great mystery of our consciousness is beyond our grasp."

William Shatner (1931 –), Canadian actor

What do you think?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What can AI do?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Someone offers to give you a robot that will do all your chores — but it seems like it can think just like you do. Would you say yes to owning the robot?

5. Express

What do others believe? - What should we do to treat animals better? Talk about it with your classmates.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine you meet a robot that talks to you. Write a diary entry about it.

Glossary

Judge - The person in a court of law who decides how the law should be applied.

Mark Zuckerberg - Since founding Facebook as a university student, Zuckerberg has become one of the top ten richest people in the world.

Accused - Claim that someone has done something wrong.

AI - A computer programme that has been designed to think.

Slavery - When people are owned by others, and often forced to work without pay.

Jury - A group of people who are chosen to look at evidence about a crime and decide what the facts are.

Guilty - Responsible for doing something wrong.

Experts - Someone who knows a lot about a particular subject.

Consciousness - When someone is aware of their own body and environment, they are "conscious".

ChatGPT - An Artificial Intelligence chatbot released in November 2022.

Vertebrates - Animals which have backbones.

Invertebrates - Animals without backbones.

Rights - The things that you should be able to do or have in law.