

Introduction other one travels around the world. denette



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Introduction

This is an essay is based on some philosophical work by Daniel Denette's *Where Am I?* and John Searle's *Myth about computers*. Daniel explores the functioning of the brain in relation to the body while John addresses Artificial intelligences and the myths surrounding it.

Where Am I? By Daniel Denette

This work by Denette addresses the personal identity crisis. It starts with the philosopher going to help the government in an important top secret project. This project involves retrieval of war head missiles buried deep underground.

This retrieval is hard because the missiles are produced a dangerous radiation that only affects the brain. The person to do the retrieval has to leave his brain behind to avoid the radiation exposure. Denette agrees to have his brain removed and undertake the mission. After the successful surgery, he goes to visit his brain and is perplexed by the notion of where he is. He also wonders, if thoughts and perception come from the brain why his are coming from the body. His location is now determined by his point of view, and he wonders where " here" is.

Is it in the vat where his brain is suspended or is it where he is standing in the lab? If then our perception of location is determined by our point of view then how is one physically terrified while watching a scary scene in a movie, while knowing that whatever is happening the viewer is safe in the cinema's seat? This idea is also expressed by Banach (2000) who says that our identity is tied to where our perspective is and our point of view. Denette leaves his brain in the Lab and goes to retrieve the missile. The distance

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between the body and brain causes a delay especially in eye hand coordination activities. While disarming the missiles underground, the radio signal between the body and the brain is lost and Denette is left deaf, blind and dumb. He loses consciousness and when he wakes up he is in a new body. He says that having a different body didn't change his identity. This also makes one wonder about the previous belief, that the body determines the point of view.

Apart from the new body there was another development. Before he left for the mission, the project had duplicated his brain functions to make a computer duplicate of his mind. These two brains are so in sync such that there is no difference between when he is using his brain or the computer duplicate. One cannot help but wonder the possibility of another body being wired to the brain.

On the negative side having another person that you know as well as you does yourself is not a comforting idea. The idea of to sharing all you have with this other person is a little alarming. But it can work out well too; by having the other person (who is essentially you) do all the things you have always wanted to do.

Person A could stay here in the normal job and with the family, while the other one travels around the world. Denette took measures to ensure that would be no other person roaming around wired to his brain. The issue of identity is more confusing, as one wonders if it is defined by the new body or the two brains. Apparently, it is possible to teleport from one body to another

without altering the identity as long as the old body is destroyed. The old body's perception, if not destroyed would change altering his identity.

There would be two people with slightly similar identities (Dennett, 1978).

Later on, Denette explains to an audience how it's easy to alternate from one brain to another when something bizarre happens. He flips the switch and a voice says "" THANK GOD! I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER FLIP THAT SWITCH", he then realizes that the two brains are no longer in sync.

Since it is apparent that the brain determines the identity of a person, will one of the brain change and adapt different perceptions and belief creating a new Identity? Will that be a better version of the original Denette? One starts to wonder, " How many of me are out there?"What determines what we are our bodies, soul or mind? Can either of them exist without the other?

Myth of the computer

This was put forward by John R. Searle, explaining the relationship between the brain and the mind. The mind determines the identity of a person and human behavior that can be explained by cognitive science and neurophysiology. Recently, there is an attempt to explain human behavior with the integration of the two processes and show relationship between the mind and the brain. This research is known as Artificial intelligence (AI).

The mind is seen as a complex computer program, where mental states and processes are similar to computer process and states. This theory expresses the idea that mind is an abstract thing; therefore any computer program me with the right input and output can have a mind. The brain is seen as one of the many computer program the mind is attached to.

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Another assumption is that if a computer program can convince an expert of its mind, then it does have a mind. This is measured with a Turing test devised by Alan Turing which determines if something can think. Strong Artificial Intelligence compares the brain to a digital computer and the mind to a program. To understand this clearly let us examine some of the points stated. Strong Artificial Intelligence assumes that the mind is not influenced by the brain's biological functions and that it is not a biological product.

The brain's biological functions are not irrelevant, some human behavior when observed shows that these functions are important e. g. the feeling of thirst. One can make a computer program that can simulate the thirst. But the action of being thirsty does not look real. Computer programs cannot symbolize or represent things but a mind can use symbols to represent thoughts.

It is therefore, easy to see that the mind cannot be separated from the biological functions of the brain or body (Searle, 1984) The Chinese room thought experiment seeks to explain this theory. A person who does not know Chinese is put in a closed room. The room has boxes of Chinese symbols that he is supposed to match. He has a rules book in English which helps him match the symbols and give the matched symbols to the people outside the room. The person in the room is the computer, the rules book is the program, the symbols given to the person are the questions and the matched symbols the person hands back are the answers. With an improved program and the person becoming better at matching the symbols, the computer can pass the Turing test. This is because at this level the computer is able to speak as well as a native Chinese speaker.

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But with all that, the computer cannot attach meaning, interpretation or content like the brain and mind. Computers can only manipulate information to give the desired result. It has syntax with no semantics. Syntax is the grammar or the logical form of a sentence while the semantic is the meaning. Searles therefore says " No formal program by itself is sufficient for understanding, because it would always be possible in principle for an agent to go through the steps in the program and still not have relevant understanding (Parfit, 1984). We need to understand that brain processes produce mental phenomenal and mental states are made in the brains function. To have a thinking computer, it would have to simulate and produce mental states and have specific programs that will make it function like a brain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the brain and the mind are very complex and the mental processes are caused by behavior elements in the brain. Whether we chose to understand behavior from cognitive science, neurophysiology or artificial Intelligence research, is our minds determine our identity and thus the uniqueness. Strong artificial intelligence of a thinking computer that is a duplicate of a human mind would be a clone, as it would have to have the same processes as the brain. All these are possible with clear understanding of how the brain works.

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