

Doctors' arguments

Profession



This paper seeks to examine several arguments presented by three doctors concerning the presence of mental states in a non-human brain and posit the writer's own reasoning and conclusion.

The three arguments will be presented along with the writer's commentary on each. After careful examination of the arguments and reading various sources, the writer has come to a conclusion that non-human brains are capable of mental states albeit extremely limited ones.

In the matter of mental states, it would be useful for the writer of this essay to first define the mental state. For purposes of this essay, a mental state will include conditions or processes that are performed exclusively by thinking and feeling organisms.

Therefore, in examination of the arguments, the capacities of thinking and feeling are key to the presence of mental states. It is imperative that the brain in examination should be able to induce emotion and thought.

It must be noted that the patient in question could be the writer herself.

The first doctor posits that the patient in question is not capable of thinking and feeling, because of the absence of the soul. Thus it is established that the patient in question does not have a soul and is not perhaps human.

Personally, the writer finds it even more difficult to explain the concept of the soul than that of mental states. Mental states may be recognized and even documented, however, in the field of evidence, souls have not been documented or recognized.

Perhaps the doctor in this argument would equate the soul to the mind, an entity which is hidden and whose inner workings in the capacity of the <https://assignbuster.com/doctors-arguments/>

human body are mysterious and unexplainable but are thought to function fundamentally for human existence.

In Gilbert Ryle's examination of Descartes' position on the matter (1949), the separation of mind and body are presented to give way for the understanding of mental states in a separate fashion. However, Ryle mentions the difficulty in examining the mind because of the mystery of its powers and processes (Ryle, 1949).

If we were to follow Ryle's work, the mind presents a consciousness or entity separate from physical space and intangible to the senses. The processes which it undertakes are not witnessed at all and it is sometimes even perceived that these processes may not exist.

The fact that these processes cannot be monitored give venue to its questionability. For the writer, explaining the presence of mental states through the soul which can be similar to the mind is insufficient because of the difficulty in verification.

Also, Ryle explains the difficulty in seeking to explain the causality of the mind's processes (Ryle, 1949). If such a mysterious and invisible entity exists, how can it directly cause so many actions? Also, the congruence of such actions is questionable, such as how a will can cause a perception to scratch his nose (Ryle, 1949)?

The second doctor's argument posits that only organic brains alike to those of humans are possible of having mental states. It is thus established that the patient in question (who is most probably the writer) does not have an organic brain and the brain itself is not akin to a human brain. This presumes

that the doctor believes in the existence of brains that are inorganic and not human, and explains the difference as well. Inorganic brains are not capable of mental states and processes.

What then, are the capacities of an inorganic brain?

Searle (1980) posits the 'strong AI' or strong artificial intelligence in this case, which is capable of outputting actions and responses similar to that of humans when presented with certain stimuli (Searle, 1980). This strong AI has its own structure or physical materials and to function, it is programmed with a set of rules to follow and guidelines in which the responses of humans are thought to be replicated.

Perhaps the doctor thinks that artificial brains that are programmed are not entirely possible of replicating human thought. After all, the set of rules that the AI is governed by dictates its responses and in the end, it will only follow those rules. The doctor may be looking for responses that are unique to humans and that vary greatly.

Indeed, even the strongest AI is still governed by only a larger and more intricate set of rules which the human programming it inputted. It would only go as far as the human who created it could consider.

The last doctor then rejected the former's conclusions and reasoning by virtue of the outputs that the patient presented. The similarity to human actions made the doctor believe that though the patient has an artificial brain, the brain could produce mental states.

Bertrand Russell posits the capacity of the mind to react to stimuli in unique ways depending perhaps on the mental state in which the person is in

(Russel, 2001). The last doctor may see that the patient reacts in unique ways, and similarly to a human, due to the fact that the patient had lead a normal life up to the moment her brain was examined.

After examining all the doctors' arguments the writer would like to concentrate on the second argument. The most probable form of artificial brain would be that of an AI and its strength determines how much of a mental state it can produce.

However, once the program is inputted, the AI can still only perform what the program tells it to, and most probably, be in whatever mental state the program also tells it to. A human brain, on the other hand, can change responses depending on the mental state, which no program induces.

It is then that the writer posits that the patient does have mental states, but because of the lack of information from the prompt, the mental states cannot be examined. However, if an artificial brain is in place within the patient's brain, then the mental states are dictated by the program as well.

The writer also says that no matter how numerous the responses are that are programmed into the patient's artificial brain, these responses can never be changed and can never differ from what they are programmed to do. The AI can perhaps learn but cannot exhibit the changing responses of a human.

If the question would be solely based on mental states then the position of this writer would be that the patient is capable of producing and being in mental states, but these are all borne from programming. The validity of the programming is not in question in this essay but only that of the mental states.

In going further, these mental states of the artificial brain can only produce set and programmed outputs. True, the patient may indeed feel pain and pleasure, but the responses are set. They may be numerous, but always set.

The new factor that would come in when considering the mental states of human brains and that of artificial brains is that of the concept of choice. A human can feel a mental state and choose to respond to it. She may respond in different ways and it would be depending on her choice.

An artificial brain on the other hand would need only look to the rules programmed into it and evaluate several factors and produce a response that would follow the said rules. Indeed, the mental states that the patient goes through may even be the programmed response as well, accompanying the outside response as well, to make the patient herself unaware of her own artificial brain.

What then of the human brain, is it programmed as well? Could socialization and other life processes have acted as the programmers for our brains? This question would depend on how the human makes her choices. After all, a human can change on her own but an artificial brain can only do what it does again and again.

Bibliography

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