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The Mind's Sky: On Computers and Consciousness

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Abstract:

In this paper I present the significance of a theorem that I recently discovered – One Observer Theorem. This theorem goes against the view that consciousness emerges from the complexity of the brain's interconnections and shows that consciousness is like a light that makes our awareness possible, in which the brain plays the role of an instrument. The theorem also means that what we normally do in our lives and at our jobs, which are procedural tasks, will eventually be done by computers/AI-machines, however, they will not become conscious. I augment these proclamations by illustrating how the human mind operates and how some of its actions are not governed by logic and consistency, unlike those in a computer/AI-machine.

Keywords: One Observer Theorem, AI, artificial intelligence, consciousness, sentient

INTRODUCTION

The world is worried about where technology is going. We are in thrall of AI and like what it does for us. But what if machines became conscious? Could it be that these machines will kill us off? Will humanity's stories be forgotten?

I was relieved — for myself, and for everyone else — when I recently discovered a theorem showing why computers will never become conscious [1]. This One Observer Theorem shows that consciousness is like a light that makes our awareness possible, in which the brain plays the role of an instrument. Thus, for example, we see with the eye, but the eye does not see.

The theorem has implications for many entrenched ideas. For one, it goes against the view that consciousness emerges from the complexity of the brain's interconnections that many scientists would like to believe. Furthermore, the argument that consciousness is non-material is proof of the existence of a “higher being” who is already present in our consciousness. This also means

that whereas the idea of the evolution of animal minds is logical and reasonable, one cannot speak of an evolution of consciousness.

The theorem reinforces the idea that most popular belief systems are arbitrary storylines, and it undermines tribal religions in which if one doesn't submit to the authority of the tribe, then one deserves to die, or once one is in the tribe, then an attempt to walk away is blasphemy, which is punishable by death.

The world will change irrevocably. As we submit to ideas that see the world in purely procedural terms, the asuric (आसुरी) forces (purely materialistic) will become strengthened. History of the next few decades will be about the struggle to win back freedom.

The Mind's Eye

Another way to understand why computers will not become conscious is to realize that they are governed by logic and consistency. However, the mind, unlike the computer, has the capacity to hold opposites together at the same time. These could be a secret wish for an outcome opposite to the publicly professed one. I have heard of people speaking of a beautiful and oceanic feeling that made them so happy that they just wished to die.

It is possible to believe two opposing ideas without being a hypocrite. One may be pushing to advance a relationship with a secret desire to break it. Someone plugged into a seemingly happy and successful life could one day just walk out and disappear.

A tension based on contradictions in our minds becomes the driving force in life.

*1, You know it when you know you don't know it.
You are special when you realize you are not special.*

*2. To seek perfection, you must acknowledge you are imperfect.
To be able to love someone you must love yourself.*

*3. To truly love someone, you must set them free.
To have freedom you must embrace discipline.*

*4. To have an easy life you must do hard things.
To help others you must first help yourself.*

Consider the very rich and handsome Richard Cory, admirably dressed, the envy of all in the town:

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;*

*And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.
– Edwin Arlington Robinson*

The Razor's Edge

Life is a dance between two ever-changing poles, where one needs to find the sweet line in the middle to step on, which is narrow as a razor's edge.

Beneath the larger declared objective is its opposite hidden in a corner of one's mind.

George Orwell berated doublethink, which is holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting both, and truth be told, this has been used by tribal religions for mind-control. But to a certain extent it is part of everyone's life.

To live life to the fullest, one must be ready to die at any moment: this is the biggest contradiction we carry in our hearts.

Here's one stanza from a poem in [Path of Light and Shadow](#) [2]:

*To live/ one must die everyday
and not even make a sound/ or sigh*

Speaking of the more prosaic matter of physics, we can never explain how the electron (or photon) travels through two slits at the same time. It means that the language we use for explanations is not powerful enough to describe reality, and likewise it has insufficient power to communicate felt experience.

The Mind's I

The computer screen with the tabs of open windows is the perfect example for how the mind works. One flits from one tab to another, become one with the story on the tab, and as the attention wanes, one moves to another tab; or one simply waits for the updating feed on one's SM timeline.

There is no mind's "I" in this process, for the self within one identifies with the characters that scroll in front of one.

We are an attention process, completely governed by the environment, be it social forces around us, or the algorithms that project different stories on the screen.

There is no freedom in this process. The attention sags if there is too much certainty in the unfolding of images, and, therefore, one also seeks a zone of uncertainty. If there is too much certainty, one's bored and depressed whilst with too much uncertainty, one's scared and anxious.

Navigating through this uncertainly space makes it appear that we have freedom, but it is just a simulacrum of freedom.

So, one must hurry slowly.

Once one learns to enjoy solitude, it becomes easier to have friends.

The more one wishes to control events, the more the situation slip out of one's hands.

The harder one tries to please, the less one is liked.

Closing Remarks

Computers/AI-machines are governed by logic and consistency. What we normally do in our lives and at our jobs, which are procedural tasks, will eventually be done by computers/AI-machines. However, as shown above, these machines cannot become conscious because, unlike the mind, they do not have the capacity to hold opposites together at the same time.

In other words, even though we are replaceable at *nearly all* we do, AI-machines will not become conscious.

Brief Profile of the Author:

Subhash Kak is an Indian-American computer scientist, an archaeoastronomer and a Vedic scholar. He is the Regents Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering Department at Oklahoma State University–Stillwater, and a member of the Indian Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council.

Born in Srinagar, Kashmir, he was educated in various places in Jammu & Kashmir and completed his PhD in Electrical Engineering from IIT, Delhi. His research has spanned the fields of information theory, cryptography, neural networks, and quantum theory. He has recently advanced a theory that physical space is e-dimensional and shown that this helps solve some problems of cosmology and that it explains certain features of the genetic code. He is the author of 30 books including technical works and books on Indian science, yoga and art. These include “The Nature of Physical Reality”, “The Architecture of Knowledge”, “Mind and Self”, and “The Idea of India”.

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