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An Afterlife in AI

The components of our existence have been questioned by philosophers and other intellectuals for thousands of years. Each deep pondering inquiry or hypothetical proposition has been bound by one pragmatic certainty. The single greatest common denominator between all living organic beings; Immortality. With the rapid expanse of technology, the foundation for the belief in the possibility of the existence of an ‘afterlife’ has gained entirely new interpretations. If the materialization of the theoretical ‘afterlife’ bridges from the world of religiosity into the world of science, should the presence of ethical moral guidance follow in translation.

Throughout history, science and religion have been in constant battle to explain various, otherwise unexplainable, phenomena. Believers in science would suggest that there is a fixed number of days limiting one's existence, which is inevitably doomed by the decrease in organic cellular regeneration. While religion has supported the idea of an existence beyond the natural physical world; an afterlife created by the all mighty and holy divinity. Until recently, the idea of an afterlife has been confined to the realm of religion. That is, until, great leaps in technology further expanded the legitimacy of more complex hypothetical trajectories in which further advancements may manifest.

The advancements in modern medicine annually exceed what was, otherwise earlier that year, considered to be the farthest known limitation of knowledge. One thought experiment

implies a future wherein medicine provides alternatives to the traditional conceptions of immortality.

> "*Cognitive scientists have recently perfected a device that uploads the contents of your brain into an organic computer composed of 'biochips.' These biochips have the same causal powers as neurons. The computer is housed in a body that can be made to look like you at any stage of your adult life. The robot is outfitted with visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory sensors. After the transfer, the new body functions, from the outside, just like a healthy organism.*"
> (Schick and Vaughn 250)

This thought experiment is presented as an attempt to provide a proper definition of *personal identity* through the process of exhaustion. The moral and ethical nature of such practice is under investigation. Can answers be found to questions such as, "Is the person in the new body, the same as the person in the old body?" Or, "If the person in this new body, is in fact an entirely new person, would we be justified in punishing this person with jail if the previous inhabitant had committed a crime?" The answer to such a question is dependent on the moral justification which guides the resolution to the previous question about numerical consistency(two thing being considered identical) in the procedure of transferring the mind of one body to another.

Assuming such existence of such an advanced treatment would most likely require the involvement of researchers in the coding profession. Someone would be required to write the code that analyzes the data captured from the original brain scan. To anyone who has watched movies that involve humanized robots, they too know that something bad will happen. For some reason, evil always persuades the ethical moral compass of future technology developers. Somewhere hidden deep in the core code of all robots is a 'secret' switch. When activated, all autonomous control of the robot is removed. This surely violates the criteria provided in the *ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* (Association for Computing Machinery).

Let's assume that the implementation of the new body did not have such a severe flaw, maybe something more comparable to present day privacy concerns. The new body must have eyes to provide visual input, cameras that relay information to the central computer for processing. But we know too well that our smartphones automatically and immediately upload the data of an image the moment it is taken on the camera. We assume that the information stored in the cloud is private, but there are also many examples of hackers breaking into these secure platforms. In this world of robotic transplant humans, the temptation of the government, by authority, may mandate they have access to this data. For the purpose of scanning everyone's visual input to spot and track criminals. This is a reality we too know all too well. "It became public that police used video cameras equipped with facial recognition to scan the faces of the 100,000 visitors to the Bowl in search of wanted criminals." (Brey) With every visual input captured by your new body accessible without the consent of the creator raises many ethical concerns. Although this idea is still theoretical, how much further must technology advance to close the gap to reality.

The answer to this question may not come in the form of a shiny new robotic body depicted in movies like the *Terminator,* but more along the plot line of the movie *Surrogate*. By taking a sample of DNA, a clone can be created in a laboratory near you. Don't believe me, here is the introduction on a website to a company that has been in business in the United States for over 15 years. "Dog cloning through ViaGen Pets presents an opportunity for dog owners to open a new window for extending their relationships with their beloved pets. Dogs provide a unique form of companionship, loyalty and love." (ViaGen LC) Now you may be asking, why haven't we cloned any Humans yet? Surely it would be desirable to replace the spot of a lost loved one. But, can we be certain that the replacement clone would be identical? What if we do

not like the replacement. Can we discard it because we purchased it? Or is the replacement granted inalienable right like all other humans? The reason it is still illegal must be because the correct answer to these questions is yet to be determined. Differing resolutions will vary based on the orientation of the moral compass of the person tasked with providing an answer. The correct answer may never be determined.

As the advancements of technology enabled further exploration into what is possible, the question of what should ethically be allowed must always be considered. History has displayed time and time again that the invasion of privacy is easily overtaken when deliberate intention to preserve such freedoms is not present.

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