

Ask A Genius 88 – Life and Death (3)
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This session has been edited for clarity and readability.

Rick: My eye is sore. I only have one contact in, so I am working with $\frac{3}{4}$ of a brain. So, excuse any nonsense. We were talking about death and overcoming death. I believe that we will have the technology to continue human consciousness indefinitely because I am an informationist (Zahedi, 2015; Jürgen, n.d.; Giridharadas, 2010; n.a., n.d.).¹

I believe the brain is an information processor. Consciousness is made out of information as it's being processed (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015; Gennaro, n.d.; Van Gulick, 2016). It is a finite amount of information. There's nothing magic about it. Eventually, we will be able to replicate the processes that go into information processing in the brain and the consciousness associated with that information processing.

However, our technical mastery of thought and information processing within consciousness will eventually mean that we can do better than the human and that unaugmented humans won't be the pinnacle of existence.

¹ *What is Digital Philosophy?* (n.d.) states:

Digital Philosophy (DP) is a new way of thinking about the fundamental workings of processes in nature. DP is an atomic theory carried to a logical extreme where all quantities in nature are finite and discrete. This means that, theoretically, any quantity can be represented exactly by an integer. Further, DP implies that nature harbors no infinities, infinitesimals, continuities, or locally determined random variables. This paper explores Digital Philosophy by examining the consequences of these premises.

At the most fundamental levels of physics, DP implies a totally discrete process called Digital Mechanics. Digital Mechanics[1] (DM) must be a substrate for Quantum Mechanics. Digital Philosophy makes sense with regard to any system if the following assumptions are true:

All the fundamental quantities that represent the state information of the system are ultimately discrete. In principle, an integer can always be an exact representation of every such quantity. For example, there is always an integral number of neutrons in a particular atom. Therefore, configurations of bits, like the binary digits in a computer, can correspond exactly to the most microscopic representation of that kind of state information.

In principle, the temporal evolution of the state information (numbers and kinds of particles) of such a system can be exactly modeled by a digital informational process similar to what goes on in a computer. Such models are straightforward in the case where we are keeping track only of the numbers and kinds of particles. For example, if an oracle announces that a neutron decayed into a proton, an electron, and a neutrino, it's easy to see how a computer could exactly keep track of the changes to the numbers and kinds of particles in the system. Subtract 1 from the number of neutrons, and add 1 to each of the numbers of protons, electrons, and neutrinos.

n.a. (n.d.). *What Is Digital Philosophy?*. Retrieved from
https://web.archive.org/web/20140928110805/http://www.digitalphilosophy.org/?page_id=2.

Human consciousness will eventually be seen as more trivial than it is now. It will become increasingly fashionable to not give too much of a crap about human consciousness. So, the same forces of improving information analysis and processing that will help us understand processing in the brain will eventually surpass human thought.

What humans want and how humans are, at the very least, will be seen as old school, there's lots of precedent for that. We put pets to sleep. We slaughter meat animals. Even though, most people believe that pets and meat animals have consciousness.

But not consciousness that is so important that we do every possible thing to keep pets alive and to make meat animals' lives pleasant. In terms of human consciousness, our best model for our priorities is the Golden Rule (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1998; Puka, n.d.).

We know we like being conscious and alive. Under the Golden Rule, we extend that to other people, but, in a way, it applies to ourselves. Hidden within the Golden Rule, kinda, is – with the Golden Rule as treat others as you like to be treated and, maybe with the $\frac{3}{4}$ of a brain I am veering off into nonsense – that we look to our own experience to know what we like and by extension what other humans would like.

Which is being treated with decency and being able to do stuff, hidden deep behind that is existence, based on our individual experience, offers the potential to be pleasurable. Even miserable people keep going with the idea that there are things to keep persisting for, most people aren't miserable all of the time.

Most people find existence pleasurable, which is as it should be for evolved creatures. You can't have creatures that survive to reproduce if its existence is miserable. Once we've reproduced, basically, nature gives less of a crap about the quality of our existence.

Old peoples' existences are not as pleasurable as people who are of reproductive age.

Scott: So, you're speaking to a hoped-for future, which can be seen in a hoped-for life here and now, or in a hoped-for afterlife in the sense that these are beliefs that are held in conscious creatures. That if things are bad now, they will become good on net later on.

Rick: Yes, I don't want to get deep into if the average person's average level of experience is miserable or not. It's not. Most peoples' experience is pretty good. What I am trying to say, in the twaddle that I've been saying, is the yardstick for quality of existence is human consciousness, it's the yardstick behind the Golden Rule.

What we like, we can assume other people like, e.g. basic principles of decency, treating other people fairly, and allowing them to continue to exist, is based on the pleasure we feel in existing. We are the yardstick. 'The measure of man is man,' someone said, I think.

Scott: Man is the measure of all things (Dictionary.com, 2017; Encyclopædia Britannica, 2012).

Rick: Okay, there you go. I am going to blame my one contact lens and partially shutdown half of my brain based on lack of input.

Scott: There's another level to that, if I can add to that.

Rick: Okay.

Scott: You're speaking to individual experience. There's also group awareness. So, if "man is the measure of all things," if people are the yardstick for the Golden Rule, then the Golden Rule implies human consciousness, so human consciousness implies concepts of others and relationships. So, this the Golden Rule implies groups too.

Rick: We support or approve humans in groups because groups of humans over history have helped individual humans live decent lives. Right now, in America, we are annoyed at humans in groups because humans in groups elected our most clownish and dangerous president.

Politicians we also elected are doing nothing to represent us in our displeasure with this dangerous guy and a lot of the things he stands for. We're not finding groups very helpful, but, in general, groups are helpful.

However, unfortunately, groups of humans are made up of humans, and we're still the same groups of dumbshits as 100,000 years ago. We have managed to come up with systems as groups of humans that generally work for the benefit of people.

But since we're just humans with our limited capabilities, sometimes, you get glitches like Trump.

Scott: Is it a glitch or is it old school emotional baggage that's also evolved along with our feelings around the Golden Rule – selfishness, self-interest, xenophobia, hatred?

Rick: Yes, when you talk about the Golden Rule, it is not just all about the pleasure of being human. All sorts of cultural values sneak in. All sorts of cultural values are taken into account.

Scott: Where do those cultural values come from? They come from the human brain. They come from ancient evolved capacities.

Rick: They come from evolution. Evolution doesn't want anything. Evolution is a force. The way evolution keeps score is the animals that are more successful at reproducing reproduce and pass on their genes.

So, evolution rewards behaviours and characteristics that contribute to survival across time, for persistence. Behaviors that contribute to persistence, to living long enough to reproduce. Our values are, more or less, rooted in those same behaviours.

Stable societies allow more people to survive long enough to reproduce. All of our values go back to evolutionary principles.

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