

How Can You Talk to Yourself? (<https://mindmatters.ai/podcast/ep102>)

Robert J. Marks:

Are we here to re-create ourselves? That's the topic we revisit today on Mind Matters News.

Announcer:

Welcome to Mind Matters News, where artificial and natural intelligence meet head-on. Here's your host, Robert J. Marks.

Robert J. Marks:

Greetings. Today, we're going to continue to talk about a book by Dr. Geoffrey Simmons, and the title of the book is, Are We Here to Re-Create Ourselves?: The Convergence of Design. Dr. Simmons is a fascinating guy. He's a retired medical doctor who has 40 years of specialization in internal medicine. I should say over 40 years of specialization in internal medicine. He has written a number of books, both fiction and non-fiction and we're here to talk about his latest book and it's titled, again, Are We Here to Re-Create Ourselves? Dr. Simmons, welcome.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Thank you. Glad to be here.

Robert J. Marks:

We have been talking about your book, and I wanted to talk some more about it. You have one chapter, something called The Thinking Piece, and another one on The Memory Piece. And in there, you trace from one-cell organisms to humans. Can you kind of unpack that and give us some examples that highlight these capabilities?

Geoffrey Simmons:

I'd be glad to. As I mentioned a little earlier on the previous podcast that we do see animals and all kinds of organisms having some ability that smacks of thinking. And indeed you can expose bacteria to something scary and a light or anything like that and then show that to their offspring, which are not offspring in the sense that we think of it, and they will go away from it.

Geoffrey Simmons:

Now, it is that thinking or what is that? It's the change in DNA? We see that kind of thing with, with animals too where it'll skip a generation. Epigenetics is the title to that and we see that with monkeys. We see that with a lot of problem-solving, monkeys using tools, monkeys using mechanisms to get places like a stick for a cane or through water, getting across a creek, in other words, problem-solving, coming up with something novel to solve a problem.

Geoffrey Simmons:

You see with crows, there's a whole bunch of shows on National Geographic, I think TV, where they show animals doing these things and crows can use sticks to get different items to eat. They can drop rocks in like a beaker to make the water level come up so they can get whatever it is that's floating on

the top of the water. All these... It's something that they've never seen before. So it's not as if this is just in their genes or something maybe they learned long ago. They actually seem to think through what they're doing.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And we do all that kind of stuff and more, and dolphins in particular and the whales and animals of the higher thinking capabilities. There's lots of data on things that they do for thinking. I remember a study with dolphins choosing what food they wanted and how much they wanted, when they wanted it and it is as if they were thinking. We haven't learned to be able to talk to them yet to, I mean, it'd be wonderful if we could, but I, I think they're very smart and they're right up there with the top five in the world.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And dogs, we all know our dogs think, goodness. My dogs think all the time. Most people who are dog owners would tell you that dogs have emotions and they think, and they think through things. I think it's too obvious. There's a veterinarian who has written a book about dogs thinking, I think his name is Ernst, but I could be wrong, but be that as it may, they study these animals with MRIs, functional MRIs. They train the dogs to stay still and then they show them certain things and they try to show that they're actually thinking about what they're showing them or asking them to do. It's very, very interesting stuff.

Robert J. Marks:

One of the things that I wonder about artificial intelligence is, well concerns creativity. I don't believe artificial intelligence will ever be creative and I'm joined in that arena by such notorious people, such as Nadella, who's the CEO of Microsoft. He wrote a book I think called Hit Refresh.

Robert J. Marks:

And also by the great Sir Roger Penrose, who wrote a phenomenal book called *Shadows of the Mind*, which challenged the idea that artificial intelligence could ever be creative. They said that creativity comes from a flash of genius, typically in the human being or that's a common vehicle for it. You had a great quote in your book, which I thought was, "Yes, this is a micro flash of genius". You quoted Rush Limbaugh and Rush Limbaugh said, "That's one of the best questions I've ever asked myself".

Robert J. Marks:

It was kind of like this mind that was external to the brain that was conversing with itself. You also quoted Plato that said, "Thinking is the talking of the soul with itself". So there's something happening there with thinking and creativity that is beyond probably what artificial intelligence will ever do.

Geoffrey Simmons:

You know, that's a... I find extremely interesting area I have in my book and my talks and other actually blogs too. Who's talking to whom? What people always say and I told myself, all kinds of things along that line, bawled myself out, and who's talking to who? Is it the left brain talking to the right brain? Is it the soul talking to the body? Is it Freud's id ego and the super ego? Who or what in there is talking to themselves? In fact, people who have half a brain, if they're young enough, they have brain removed because of epilepsy, have thinking almost similar to our own. I cannot say exactly if they say that or think that so it's as if we could function with either half in a certain point in life and beyond who's talking to who.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I go back to this Pinocchio movie where Jiminy Cricket is on one shoulder and Lampwick is on the other. Lampwick, was telling him them do bad things and Jiminy Cricket's telling him to do good things. Some of us think that's what's going on, split personalities. Are they really telling us what's in there? Are people who blackout alcoholics who go on to drive cars and do other things, is that the other personality that's come forward? There is something going on that we really can't explain and so is this just some physical phenomenon, something mechanical or is it the spark of life? Is it the soul? And I, I think it's in part the soul or the spirit. The scientists tried to explain how life came about with the Urey Miller experiment that's kind of tired of hearing about it, but in actuality, they didn't prove anything there. And nobody understands where the spark of life comes from and yet we know it's there. We know it's there. And I don't think we could be creative without that spark alive.

Robert J. Marks:

Yes ... speaking about the Miller Urey experiment, I heard a good story about that recently in, in Dallas, where somebody that was challenging the Miller Urey experiment and exactly what it contributed to the origin of life, put a, a bowl of chicken soup next to a chicken and he says, "Now all's we have to do after the Miller Urey experiment is take this chicken soup and make it into the chicken". That's how far that they had to go in order to get something. But another thing is that people have challenged, including in the book by Thaxton, Bradley and Olsen, The Mystery of Life's Origin, which The Walter Bradley Center is re-releasing with lots of good augmented material, talks about the Miller Urey experiment and the fact they didn't even have the atmosphere right at the time. So all of their, all of their conclusions were just totally bogus.

Geoffrey Simmons:

I think I have that book, I think Discovery Institute sent me a copy and I think I have it to read on the nightstand.

Robert J. Marks:

The good part about it, it was released 35 years ago and a lot can happen in science in 35 years. So there's augmenting chapters by people such as Steve Meyer and James Tour and Jonathan Wells. And, and that, that it basically says that it's still a mystery. There is absolutely no idea or no clue where life originated from. Just fascinating stuff. You mentioned about people with a half a brain that, that is kind of goes back to Rush Limbaugh doesn't it? And one of his, one of his sayings that he talks with half of his brain tied behind his back, but the brain is fascinating. Michael Egnor actually talks about experiments. This is also epileptic where they actually do a split brain experiment. And they actually, sever the right-hand portion of the brain with the left-hand portion of the brain. And so there's no longer communication, yet even after that happens, you have a person with a single personality. So it maybe suggests that there's something of the mind that is happening external to the brain, it's really mysterious stuff.

Geoffrey Simmons:

It is. It is and it lacks an explanation.

Robert J. Marks:

Yes. Well, thus far. Maybe there's some things that can be done scientifically to shed more light on that. So final question from a sci-fi writer, and you do write science fiction and a physician's perspective who writes non-fiction, how do you see AI playing out in the future?

Geoffrey Simmons:

Not good in some instances. I ... Two of my books, actually three, four of my books, one is called The Adam experiment, which has to do with childbirth and outer space. The first time humans do that, one called Murdoch. These are old books. I mean, the technology in there is very old-fashioned, but Murdoch was a malevolent computer in a hospital. And then I have two spoofs, one called The Glue Factory, the other one called To Glue or Not To Glue. Anyway, be that as it may, I talk about some of these issues in there. And I think AI in medicine is going to be a whole lot up to the programmer or the coder because I, I already see it in my profession and I don't like what I see. I mean, I... It already knows if I make a diagnosis of pneumonia, it knows not only you have to put a code down for pneumonia, but I also have to prescribe a certain antibiotic if it's a bacterial infection.

Geoffrey Simmons:

So in our... The machine electronic record already knows what I'm doing and it already has built in, if a diagnosis pneumonia is made, this is what should be tried first, unless they're allergic. And this is what you try second, and these are what tests you should do. So what would happen next is "Why didn't you do that"? Why are... "Congrats, you followed our... what we told you to do". And so not only would it be telling you what to do and watching you what you're doing, but will also be tabulating what you do. And I can just see at the end of the month, half the time he didn't listen to what you're supposed to do or something along that line to a doctor or to a nurse and if you keep this up, coming from a computer, you'll have to come explain yourself in front of so-and-so committee.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And so we have more and more protocols. I retired, I think almost in time to get out of most of this, but we have lots of protocols that come along. This, this is what you do in this circumstance. And that's why actually we're having less doctors in the primary care and more nurses and other technicians who don't need to go through medical school to follow the recommendations of the computer. And so I, I just see it taking over and the more malevolent it is, or the more attentive to the bottom line financially or whatever they're trying to prove or not prove. I mean, it, there's all kinds of problems in medicine I could write a whole book on it, except am I writing somewhat as an escape in life, but they don't want the doc... and companies don't want the doctors who attract the complicated patients that take up time and cost a lot of money.

Geoffrey Simmons:

They don't want the doctors who are capable of taking care of those. And so their computers will be... Their AI will be designed to look for that. The other thing is about AI is it, it is helpful in some areas like pap smears. They have AI reviewing pap smears now, and after seeing 10,000 of these in preparation, it could spot problems and has been shown this, spot problems better than human beings can. If you have a skin lesion and it, I'm sure it's going to happen, if not the science fiction part of me, is that the machine will have visual capabilities and lights. And it'll say, have them hold their forearm up in front of the, the camera and then have him turn right, left, whatever, let me change some lights and make them blue and ultraviolet and everything else. And then it'll make a diagnosis for the doctor and it'll tell them what to do.

Geoffrey Simmons:

And if the doctor doesn't want to do it, it'll keep track of that you didn't want to do it. So I foresee all, I just know that's coming. It's already here in many senses. So from a medical perspective, I don't like what I'm seeing at the same time one could argue, well, medical care may be better, medical care may be cheaper along in some of those things, but on average with average stuff, it's wonderful. But when you get it, it's like making everybody in third grade pass with Cs. We don't want any A students and we don't want any F students. And so I see AI making us all kind of mediocre and following orders.

Robert J. Marks:

Hopefully artificial intelligence will augment the skills of physicians. They will offer advice but the final decision, I think in all matters concerning artificial intelligence needs to be with the human being. You mentioned about automatic pap smears. Interesting background, I was an expert witness in a lawsuit between two companies that did automated classification of pap smears. They got it away from the cytologist, who would spend a day looking through microscopes and get really sleepy at the end of the day and make false diagnosis and these two companies both of them started making money. They sued each other and one of them hired me as a expert witness. So I know all about that and the interesting thing is that they got into big litigation, they exhausted all their money and then as soon as they were poor, a third company came in and bought them both out. And the two companies went away. So that's what happens when you fight and are watched over by a third more powerful company.

Geoffrey Simmons:

See, I don't see it entirely as benign and just being wonderful care. I think that's an offshoot and it'll be common that people will get a diagnosis quicker and we'll probably get a care quicker that's good care. But I foresee this in the administrative side of this, trying to control costs and control access and control employees. And I don't think it's going to feel good to those people.

Robert J. Marks:

Well, this was great. What a fun time to talk with you, Dr. Simmons, we've been talking to Dr. Geoffrey Simmons. He's a physician and he's the author of the new book, *Are We Here to Re-Create Ourselves?* I've read it. I've recommended it. It's available on Amazon.com. Until next time, be of good cheer.

Announcer:

This has been Mind Matters News with your host Robert J. Marks. Explore more at Mindmatters.ai, that's Mindmatters.ai. Mind Matters News is directed and edited by Austin Egbert. The opinions expressed on this program are solely those of the speakers. Mind Matters News is produced and copyrighted by the Walter Bradley Center for Natural and Artificial Intelligence at Discovery Institute.