

Re: Turing Machines and Physical Computation

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From: Neil W Rickert (rickert+nn_at_cs.niu.edu)

Date: 11/28/04

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JXStern <JXSternChangeX2R@gte.net> writes:

>On Sat, 27 Nov 2004 21:05:57 +0000 (UTC), Neil W Rickert

><rickert+nn@cs.niu.edu> wrote:

>>*I don't agree with the view that words are abstract. Doubtless, we
>>we not agree much at all on our views of language.*

>*There are whole discussions here.*

>>>*Abtraction may be (or may seem to be) a property of some entities,
>>>like concepts or propositions, but the subject of those entities may
>>>still be required to be physical and particular*

>>*I have trouble making sense of that. Why does an entity need a
>>subject? If the number three is an abstract entity, what is its
>>subject?*

>*The marks that constitute the word "cow" are an entity, but if there
>is no relationship between the marks and some distal
>subject/object/whatever, then we're nowhere.*

That's a pessimistic view. Sorry to bring the bad news, but there is no relationship.

> *On the other hand, your
>question is fair, and it may be a result, and not a fair assumption,
>that a (linguistic, symbolic, cognitive, sub-) entity needs a subject.*

A considerable amount of mathematics is done with symbols for which there is no subject. In fact, this is important, for it allows us to express general results. Later, we can interpret for particular subjects, but we can often prove the result without there being a subject.

sci.math: Re: Turing Machines and Physical Computation

>>*It seems to me that nominalism is an example of the cure for which
>>there is no disease.*

>*It seems to me that nominalism is what we do when we do computation
>with modern programming and digital electronic computers.*

I can assure you that digital computers would work just as well if
there were no nominalists around.

> *I'm not
>sure computers cure any disease, but they are useful nonetheless and
>in need of some explication to make them more useful yet.*

We can predict and control our computers to very high degrees of
accuracy. The idea that we are lacking an explanation seems
confused. If philosophy has difficulty accounting for computers,
that only reflects on the inadequacies of philosophy.

Perhaps the concept of "computation" seems elusive, but the
computers themselves should present no problems.

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