

I think, or so I thought

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I'm not usually one who writes articles, please excuse the quality

So what is an idea? I guess it is one of those things that are too obvious to define, like the integers or the notion of intelligence. When we share an idea or an opinion we most likely came to it via the process of reflection on past events or ideas by others. It is usually constructive to cite the sources of such ideas but it can be tricky to define a line between what you think is your contribution to that idea and what might have come from well before Confucius, Plato, or Avicenna all the way to your parents or teachers (for me, I guess it is my unfortunate luck of having a really bad memory).

It seems that mainstream history focus on so called historic conflicts of the world (evident by the history channel, maybe it is because "violence sells" or hopefully because these had real impact and we can learn from the mistakes). Generally, you may have to dig deeper in order to find some insightful information about the philosophical, cultural or artistic scene of past times. This might be the main reason why we may get a sense of "backward thinking", condescension, or ridicule of some philosophical aspects of some ancient civilizations. So what about the other really smart people of those past times? Was there no one worth remembering for his intellect aside from the usual celebrity list of rulers and so called great thinkers? This and other "ideas" led me to the following hypothesis: There are three levels of intellect that people subscribe to: people with "genuine" and creative thoughts, people who base their ideas on the previous first type, and followers of the second type. It appears that the percentage of people in the first type is extremely low, and the percentage becomes higher for the second and highest for the third.

There isn't an obvious way for me to tell that the hypothesis is a genuine idea or something I picked up from a magazine. In that case, how can we define the notation of "think for yourself" and ask people to lead their lives and not follow others opinions. This seems to me to be an ill-defined proposition. Are we asking people to move from one level to the other? Is it actually possible to do so? We are all born with a set of physical limitations on how much and how fast we can think in one second (this is not to say that it is a problem to be solved its just one of those natural things that make life interesting.. if all of us were Einsteins, I suspect life would be boring).

So maybe we are asking people to step up from a fourth level that follows the the third or some other deeper level. In reality, they are not really "thinking for themselves" especially that we have asked them to do so (paradox?).

It is funny how our minds work, the main reason I am writing this note was me remembering a discussion we had in my Artificial Intelligence (AI) course. We were discussing the possibility of

humans creating a software that potentially think like a human (if not better). I forgot why this came to me today but it seem that if we do develop an A.I. system capable of producing "genuine" and/or "creative thoughts", we might not realize them or accept them until after the inevitable destruction of that system (I base this on how we tend to recognize dead intellects more often than living ones).

I'd like to conclude with the following "idea": thoughts and ideas do not break the natural physical law of conservation of mass*, hence, they are not created out of nothing and actually form as a result of all the different interactions we have with other people's ideas. Happy thinking :)

-*Ibraheem*